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1. Introduction

There is much discussion about religion in modern or late-modern society. A main feature of this society is, according to the prevalent view, that religion has lost a substantial part of its former significant impact on human life. In modern society, cultural factors function independently of religion, political values are dissociated from religion, and societal morality is no longer steered by a dominant religious orientation (Holm, 1996: 1). As a consequence, it is assumed that modern social life suffers a decline of morality. In traditional society, religion and morality were closely connected, and the waning of the dominant position of religion in modernizing society fostered the establishment of a new or 'permissive morality' (Wilson, 1982: 86). Modern individualized, and above all liberal, society 'lacks genuine moral consensus' (MacIntyre, 1981: 254).

Not infrequently, evidence for the assumed religious decline is found in the low levels of church attendance throughout Europe. The US is an important counter case in this respect, for church attendance there has remained high (Greeley, 1985; Caplow, 1985; Casanova, 1994; Bruce, 1996). But figures of declining church adherence do not necessarily reveal a religious decline in the sense of religious beliefs. There may be a discrepancy between religious practices, on the one hand, and actual beliefs on the other. In this chapter we explore the feasibility of the ideas of secularization, not only in terms of practices, but also in terms of religious beliefs.

The data we have at our disposal contain the traditional measures of religiousness, and as such we can only investigate the idea of a decline. We cannot focus on new forms of religiousness that may have developed alongside, or instead of traditional, institutional, Christian religion. However, it must be acknowledged that the adherence to new religious movements or alternative meaning-systems is not widespread (Beckford & Levasseur, 1986; Thung, 1985). There are some indications that people remain religious in the sense of being interested in spirituality or issues concerning life and death, but such interests have not yet developed in such a way that one can speak of a new religious wave. 'Ideas about "a new religious wave" need to be seen in perspective' (Becker, de Hart & Mens, 1997: 184).

Before presenting the data on religious orientations, we first return to the issue of secularization and the current debate on this process of modernization in the domain of religion. This brief introduction to the theme of secularization will give some ideas of what can be expected when comparing the European societies with regard to some religious orientations and practises.

Some of the main aspects of secularization will be described in Section 2. In Section 3 we present an overview of the religious situation in contemporary Western and Eastern Europe distinguishing between religious beliefs and practices. Since, as will be discussed in Section 2, Catholics and Protestants are assumed to differ in many respects and thus also in their religious orientations, we explore the main differences and similarities of both religious groups in Section 4. In Section 5 an overview of the main shifts that occurred during the eighties in Western Europe will be discussed and the developments in religious orientations and behaviour within and between several age groups will be explored more detailed. The results of these analyses seem to demonstrate that there is not so much a religious crisis as an institutional crisis.

2. Religious decline: the secularization thesis

In the religious domain, the trajectory of modernization is usually interpreted by social scientists under the heading of secularization. Although in empirical research, as well as in theoretical discussions, the concept of secularization has different meanings and interpretations, there is general agreement that it refers to the process in which religion gradually loses the encompassing and important role which it had in traditional society. Some attribute the gradual decline of religion to the rationalization and de-enchantment of the world, while others explain the decreased significance of religious institutions, religious activities, and religious modes of thinking, by reference to social differentiation and specialization, as the main forces of modernization (Wilson, 1982). Due to cultural and social differentiation, people in contemporary society have to participate in different universes of meaning, each governed by its own set of values. In fact, as Mattei Dogan has noted, the 'state has dispossessed the church of some of its traditional functions (such as schools, hospices, social welfare, registry of births, marriages and deaths, culture, and organization of leisure)' (Dogan, 1995: 416). Institutional domains have become segmented in the sense that within each institutional sphere norms and values have become functional, rational and above all autonomous. Arguing along such lines, secularization can be seen as 'the repercussion of these

changes on the religious subsystem. It denotes a societal process in which an overarching and transcendent religious system is reduced to a subsystem of society alongside other subsystems, the overarching claims of which have a shrinking relevance' (Dobbelaere, 1995: 1). Religion is assumed to have become marginalized and consequently it is assumed to have lost much of its influence on people's lives.

The individual has become the main point of reference in the shaping of values, attitudes, and beliefs, and the likelihood that people feel attracted to traditional religion and the conventional beliefs preached by the church has declined. Increasingly people believe in what they themselves want to believe in, and this is not necessarily what the churches tell them to believe. In traditional societies individual belief systems were strongly dependent on what the community believed and the churches prescribed. Social control and the religious practices of the community played an important decisive role for the individual's belief system. Religious feelings in modern or late modern society are less open to social control and are more rooted in the personality. As such traditional dogmatic beliefs have been replaced by a more modern, personalized way of believing, and religious decline is mainly confined to institutional decline. As we will see in one of the subsequent chapters on political orientations, this institutional decline is not limited to the churches. All traditional, authoritarian institutions suffer a loss of confidence.

This decreasing importance of religion, is seen as merely a more or less 'natural' consequence of societies that are becoming more and more rational. Such a view took Weber (1921-1922, 1972) when he described modernity in terms of the transformation of traditional religious authority to rational legal authority. Inglehart (1997) argues in a similar way. An increasing sense of security has diminished the need for absolute rules as imposed by the churches, while it reduced the importance of religious views for, for example, the maintenance of the family unit. Further, people experience inconsistencies in their world views and daily experiences when confronted with the traditional religious traditions: 'the daily life experience of people today is basically different from the kind of life experience that shaped the Judaeo-Christian tradition. [.....] today we live in an advanced industrial society, in which computers are far likelier than sheep to be part of one's daily experience. Consequently, not only the social norms, but also the symbols and world view of the established religions, are not as persuasive or compelling as they were in their original setting' (Inglehart, 1990: 179).

According to Inglehart, religious decline might thus be seen as a result of increasing rationality, functional differentiation and specialization and increasing levels of security, produced by the establishment of the modern welfare state and material wealth. In modern, affluent societies, a gradual shift can be observed 'from emphasis on economic and physical security above all, toward greater emphasis on belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life' (Inglehart, 1990: 11). This value shift from a predominant materialistic orientation towards a post-materialistic one is expected to be 'accompanied by declining emphasis on traditional political, religious, moral, and social norms' (Inglehart, 1990: 66). In other words, in highly developed countries, the increase of post-materialism will be accompanied by changes in the traditional, church-influenced social values and morality. In economically less advanced countries, materialism will be the dominant orientation and religion will have remained an important determining factor for various spheres of social life, whereas in economically more developed areas the importance of religion has declined. Here a decreasing number of people is inclined to accept part and parcel of the traditional religious dogmas. 'The churches have lost much of their impact *ad intra*: as a consequence, individuals may reject the 'menu' of church beliefs, instead recomposing a religion *à la carte* - constructing their own religious patchwork' (Jagodzinski & Dobbelaere, 1995: 115). Such privatized religious patch works are especially assumed to be on the increase outside the core of the church constituencies.

Recently a new phenomenon has entered the discourse on modernization: the globalization of human society. Globalization has been defined 'as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens, 1990: 64). According to modernization theory, Western society has experienced a gradual transformation from a traditional society towards an industrial, and more recently modern industrial society has transformed into a post-modern order. 'Globalization theories add to this thesis that modernization in the West has directly resulted in the spread of certain vital institutions of Western modernization to the rest of the globe, especially the modern capitalist economy, the nation-state, and scientific rationality in the form of modern technology; and, critically, that this global spread has resulted in a new social unit which is much more than a simple expansion of Western modernity' (Beyer, 1994: 8). One of the implications of globalization is that people are confronted with increasing numbers of opportunities and alternative options. People are assumed increasingly to encounter a great variety of cultural habits, values and norms. As a result of globalization people 'are faced with an extending range of imaginary and information involving models of citizenship, forms of production, styles of consumption, modes of communication, principles of world order and, in addition, ways of reacting to all of these. There is enhanced

capacity for reflection as a result of the exposure to globalized social processes. A main consequence of this is that the individual has tended to develop increased expectations of personal fulfilment and satisfaction. This has produced various alternative or modified lifestyles' (Spybey, 1996: 9). However, the acceptance of such various kinds of alternatives would not occur if the processes of individualization and secularization had not liberated the individual from the institutional constraints. In traditional societies people were not only living in small local communities separated from other communities, they were also strongly influenced and dominated by traditional institutions, such as religion. In particular the churches played an important role in these traditional settings. Economic growth, the spread of affluence, rising levels of education, increased mobilization, increased technological knowledge and its many applications, have reduced the previously dominating role of religion in human society (Berger, 1967; Luckmann, 1967; Inglehart, 1990; 1995; 1997). Due to increasing individualization, people are assumed to have become increasingly free and autonomous in selecting the convictions, beliefs, and practices they want. Decisions are no longer based on what the religious institutions prescribe, but what the individual wants. In a globalized world, this freedom and autonomy of the individual implies that people can pick and choose what they want from the global religious and cultural marketplace.

Since we focus mainly on the 'traditional' indicators of religion: religious beliefs and practices, the developments described thus far lead to the presumption that traditional belief systems, taught by the churches and in earlier days presumed to be acknowledged by the majority of churched people, are gradually replaced by diversified individual belief systems and moral convictions. The available empirical data do not include other measures of religion or religiousness, such as adherence to new religious movements or new age beliefs. It is often assumed that modernization in general and processes of secularization and individualization in particular do not so much reveal a religious decline as an institutional decline. For instance, it has been argued that there is 'only the loss by religion of its traditional societal and public functions, and the privatization and marginalization of religion within its own differentiated sphere' (Casanova, 1994: 19). People have not become less religious, but less inclined to follow the traditionally religious doctrines as prescribed and imposed by the churches. Inglehart, for example, argues that although there is a continuing decline in traditional religious beliefs, there is nevertheless a growing concern for the meaning and purpose of life (Inglehart, 1997: 80).

In this chapter we explore the religious orientations of Europeans, and we will empirically investigate the appropriateness of speaking of contemporary Europe in terms of being secular. We do not include the USA in our analyses, because the trajectory of secularization in the US is different from that in Europe. In many studies it is emphasized that theoretical expectations and predictions are refuted empirically in the US where hardly anything has changed in this respect. Thus, it has been said that the thesis of secularization is wrong (Stark, 1997a: 18). According to Stark and Iannaccone (1994: 231) it is therefore better no longer to use the term secularization in theoretical discourse. In the US religion seems to have persisted as is demonstrated in much empirical research (Greeley, 1989). Finke and Stark (1992) have presented evidence that contrary to what is predicted from the theory of secularization, the trend of religious adherence in the US shows an increase and not a decrease between 1776 and 1990. Based time series data, Caplow concludes that the developments in the US can best be understood as a trend 'away from secularization, and towards what might be called sacralization' (Caplow, 1985: 103).

Others, mainly social scientists in Europe, claim the opposite. Secularization is taking place and in many countries it is even accelerating: religion is definitely on the wane in contemporary society. Thus, in the eyes of European sociologists, the US is the exceptional case, because it appears to be the only country where modernization is not accompanied by secularization. However, as Martin writes, maybe Europe is the exceptional case (Martin, 1996: 35). If he is right in claiming that Europe is the exception, it implies that secularization as it is defined and investigated these days is primarily a European affair.

However, it must be noted that the declining levels of religious adherence in Europe are just one manifestation of secularization. As Yamane says, 'secularization occurs when religious authority structures decline in their ability to control societal-level institutions, meso-level organizations, and individual-level beliefs and behaviors' (Yamane, 1997: 115). At the societal level secularization can 'be understood as the declining capacity of religious elites to exercise authority over other institutional spheres. Secularization at the organizational level may be understood as the religious authority's declining control over organizational resources within the religious sphere. And secularization at the individual level may be understood as the decrease in the extent to which individual actions are subject to religious control' (Chaves, 1994: 757). In fact this description of secularization resembles the way in which Dobbelaere has defined the concept in terms of declining religious involvement, 'laicization' and religious change (Dobbelaere, 1981: 11-12; see also McGuire, 1987; Wilson, 1982).

So, the trajectory of modernization in the domain of religion relates to three interrelated processes of change: a decreasing number of people that feel attracted to the traditional institutional religion, a shift from belief in the traditional religious doctrines towards a personal belief, and finally a decline of the dominating role of the church and religious leaders in society. Translated into empirical terms it means that we expect a decline in traditional beliefs, but not in religiosity as such.

Most empirical research focuses on religious decline, which means that is the scope of most research is limited to the individual level: beliefs and practices. In general it can be concluded that religiousness, measured by such indicators generally declined throughout Europe. However, Europe will be far from homogeneous as far as religious orientations are concerned. If, as Casanova does, secularization is seen as a modern historical process and if the idea is accepted that 'the Protestant Reformation, the rise of the modern state, the rise of modern capitalism, and the rise of modern science - set in motion the dynamics of the process by undermining the medieval system and themselves became at the same time the carriers of the process of differentiation, of which secularization is one aspect, then it follows that one should expect different historical patterns of secularization. As each of these carriers developed different dynamics in different places and at different times, the patterns and the outcomes of the historical process of secularization should vary accordingly' (Casanova, 1994: 24-25).

In Europe, an important distinction is expected to exist between Catholic and Protestant cultures. Both traditions have 'shaped enduring *national* cultures that persist today' (Inglehart, 1995: 393). Even five centuries after the Reformation, there are obvious differences between Northern and Southern Europe with regard to the importance of the religious factor and often these differences are attributed to the religious traditions in the North and the South. In Europe secularization 'has been an uneven process. It has affected the major Protestant Churches more strongly than the Catholic Church, and more fundamentalist brands of Protestantism least' (Therborn, 1995: 274). The explanation for this uneven process is partly found in the theological differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. The 'seeds of individualism were manifest much earlier in Protestantism. In contrast to Catholics, Protestants are personally responsible before God in religious matters, and the church has a lesser role as mediator between the believer and God. The Catholic Church, with its extensive, dogmatic, collective creed imposes a more collective identity upon its faithful' (Jagodzinski & Dobbelaere, 1995a: 81).

Needless to say, there will be other explanations for the differences in levels of religious involvement in Catholic and Protestant countries. Some of these focus on economic factors. In general, countries in Northern Europe score higher on wealth and prosperity than countries in the Southern part of Europe. Since it has been assumed that 'economic development goes hand in hand with a decline in religious sentiment' (Wald quoted by Lipset, 1996: 62), the north-south cultural divide might also be explained by such economic differences. That the differences in economic development can, in their turn, be explained by the differences in religious traditions, is a classical and disputed theory that will not be discussed in this chapter.

However, whatever the explanation, the impact of religion is generally assumed to be stronger in Catholic countries compared with Protestant countries, where the religious involvement is considerably lower, the level of confidence in the churches weaker, etc. (Ester et al., 1994). Furthermore, it has been argued that the differences in labour market policies, family policies, and social insurance policies between Catholic and Protestant countries can be attributed to the differences in religious traditions (Castles, 1994). Thus, the divide between Protestantism and Catholicism is assumed to have had far-reaching socio-political implications (Therborn, 1995: 213).

In his analysis of the post-modernization dimension Inglehart found empirical evidence for the Catholic-Protestant divide in Europe. The fact that countries are dominated by a certain religious tradition appeared more important for similarities in basic value orientations than their geographic proximity (Inglehart, 1997: 95). His 'cultural geography of the world' substantiates the idea of a Catholic cultural profile that can be distinguished from a Protestant profile. Furthermore his analysis demonstrated that the cultural profile of Catholics is a global phenomenon in the sense that all Catholic cultures are close to each other in the cultural space. Empirical evidence for the cultural differences between the two religious traditions was also presented by Peter Gundelach who observed that the denomination of a country plays a crucial role in the differential decline in 'familism' in Europe (Gundelach, 1994) .

The expectation in Europe therefore is, that a Catholic religious pattern can be observed that is distinctive from a Protestant pattern. But to this it can be added that the religious pattern will be dependent upon, what can be called, the 'religious economy' of a country. In analogy to mainstream economic theories some have argued that religious competition results in substantially higher levels of religiosity and church affiliation. The argument goes as follows: 'Religious economies are like commercial economies in that they consist of a market of current and potential consumers, a set of firms seeking to serve that market, and religious "product lines"

offered by various firms (..). Also like commercial economies, religious economies thrive when they are allowed to operate without government interference' (Yamane, 1997: 111). A pluralistic religious situation will be conducive to 'a wide range of alternative faiths well adapted to the needs of the consumers' (Iannaccone, 1992: 128). Therefore a key variable for explaining high levels of religious commitment and religiousness is the degree of competition among the suppliers of religion. In mono-religious cultures, there is no competition and thus low levels of religious activity is to be expected, whereas in religiously pluralistic cultures, people will be more active and more religious.

Further, we may expect a religious pattern in Eastern Europe that differs from the pattern in Western Europe. 'The Soviet regime of the past 40 years in Central and Eastern Europe was ideologically opposed to religion and religious activity. Religious activity was at least discouraged and, in some cases, severely repressed in each of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe under Soviet domination following World War II' (Gautier, 1997: 289). However, it must be acknowledged that former socialist regimes oppressed religion and the churches to varying degrees. In Bulgaria, for example, the Orthodox Churches accommodated with the regime, whereas the Catholic church in Poland strongly opposed the political regime. In general Protestant churches in many Eastern and Central European countries 'established a policy of a "church within socialism" in order to ensure at least a modicum of legitimacy' (Gautier, 1997: 290).

Despite its opposition to the regime of the Polish Catholic church, no severe actions against the church were undertaken. In Hungary, on the other hand, the church was severely subjugated and controlled by the state as was the case in Czech and Slovak regions (Pro Mundi Vita, 1984/2). Even under Soviet domination the catholic church remained in a strong position in Poland and some even claim that the Western orientation and the global organization of the Catholic church helped shape Polish 'national identification in terms of Western culture' (Gautier, 1997: 290). This applies to the Catholic church in Hungary too, but not to the Protestant churches in Hungary and East Germany which accommodated with the regimes and therefore were 'identified in the eyes of the people as operating in cooperation with the Soviet state'. As a consequence these churches lost their 'credibility among religious believers, who then disaffiliated in substantial numbers' (Gautier, 1997: 290; see also Caplow, 1985: 106).

The Eastern European religious pattern therefore is assumed to be different from the religious outlook in the West, but as in the West the religious pattern will not be very homogeneous. The degree to which these patterns are indeed heterogeneous will be explored in greater detail

using empirical data from the European Values Studies.

3. Mapping Europe's religiousness: an overview

The question how far secularization has proceeded in contemporary Europe touches at the question how religious or secular European society is. As Dobbelaere argues, the timing and pace of the religious decline 'differs from one country to the next and from one Church to another' (Dobbelaere, 1995: 1; see also Sigelman, 1977; Campbell & Curtis, 1994; Wuthnow, 1977). As was explained before, secularization defined in terms of 'the declining scope of religious authority needs to be viewed on three levels' (Yamane, 1997: 115), and thus the religious situation has to be investigated at three different levels: the societal, organizational and individual level, or: macro, meso and micro (Dobbelaere, 1981; 1997). The differences and similarities in religiousness can be explored in various ways, for example by examining the integration of church/religion and society, by evaluating the organizational development of the churches and other religious bodies or by probing people's religious beliefs and practices (Gustafsson, 1994). In this Chapter religiousness is measured at the individual level. We will focus first on religious beliefs and secondly on religious practices in contemporary Europe.

3.1 Religious beliefs

The *EVS* data include a multitude of indicators to measure several dimensions of religiosity. A first dimension relates to religious ideology or religious doctrines. Each religion 'maintains some set of beliefs which adherents are expected to ratify' (Stark & Glock, 1968: 14), and the more of these beliefs people adhere to, the stronger believer they are said to be. Such a dimension of religious faith refers to traditional religion and does not indicate a more general religious attitude. A more general dimension does not include specific statements about the content of religiosity, nor does it refer to institutional religion or concrete rules and dogmas. Being religious in a more general way may even be applicable to people who do not belong to or feel attracted by one of the traditional religions or churches (De Moor, 1987: 22).

Apart from indices for these two 'religious' dimensions, there are items available that tap the way in which people interpret the meaning of human life, death and suffering. Generally, religion is understood as providing people with explanations and interpretations of the cosmos and human existence. Religion deals with 'ultimate concerns' (Yinger, 1977). Religion has to

do with 'ultimate meaning' (Luckmann, 1967). Bellah defines religion in similar functionalist terms: religion is 'a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence' (Bellah, 1970: 21). This view on the function of religion is not confined to Western civilization, but appears more or less a universal phenomenon. In almost all cultures, religion provides people with meanings, interpretations, and explanations for crisis situations in people's lives (Geertz, 1973). Religion formulates answers to understand and cope with the world and human life. Traditional Christian religion offered a view 'that explains the origin of and the meaning behind the cosmos and human existence within the context of a transcendent and supernatural order, and it interprets the crises in the lives of human beings, suffering and death, good and evil in the light of a higher order' (Felling, Peters & Schreuder, 1991: 14).

Now that modern Western society is assumed to have become secular, such a traditional religious Christian meaning system in which reference is made to a higher order, is expected to be no longer dominant. People will be less inclined to approach the origin and meaning of the cosmos and human life from a theistic viewpoint. As Luckmann (1967) has argued, traditional Christian institutional religion is no longer the only provider of meaning in secular society. In modern society, traditional religion has to compete with other systems that also aim to supply people with meaning and explanation. The *EVS* data contain few indices to tap one of such alternative meaning systems, the immanentist world view. It can be argued that more world views are competing, but *EVS* is not equipped to measure them.[1]

3.1.1 Religious faith

In *EVS* various traditional Christian belief statements were included and respondents were asked whether or not they believed in the following: God, life after death, a soul, the devil, hell, heaven, sin, resurrection, re-incarnation. Overall in Europe, a majority of people are believers in three areas: belief in God (60%), the existence of a soul (50%) and belief in sin (48%). When it comes to issues like life after death (36%), heaven (35%), resurrection (29%), hell (19%) and devil (20%), fewer people are inclined to believe in them. Table 3.1 displays the observed answer patterns in each country. Remarkable is the proportion of Hungarians believing in a soul (13%). It is unclear why so few Hungarians believe in a soul whereas overall half of the European population believes in it.

These figures reveal rather clearly that Eastern Germany, Czech Republic and Bulgaria, are least religious in Europe as far as traditional Christian doctrines are concerned. Poles and Irish people, on the other hand, appear most religious. The Eastern German, Czech and Bulgarian

cases are corroborating the thesis about the religious market theory to explain high levels of religiousness from religious competition (Finke, 1990; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark & Iannaccone, 1994; Stark, 1997b). Mono-religious cultures are likely to display lower levels of religious belief. Eastern Germany, Czech Republic and Bulgaria are mono-religious and thus seem to confirm such ideas. However, Poland, Ireland and Romania are clearly refuting the thesis, for these countries are mono-religious as well, but nevertheless their populations appear to be more religious in a traditional way.

Table 3.1 Proportions of Europeans believing in God, life after death, soul, devil, hell, heaven, sin, resurrection

	God	life after death	soul	devil	heli	heaven	sin	resurrec-tion
France	57	38	50	19	16	30	40	27
Britain	71	44	64	30	25	53	68	32
West Germany	64	38	62	15	13	31	55	31
Netherlands	61	39	63	17	14	34	43	27
Belgium	63	37	52	18	15	30	41	29
Austria	77	44	60	20	18	39	57	41
Italy	83	54	67	36	36	45	66	44
Spain	81	42	60	28	27	48	57	36
Portugal	80	31	58	24	21	49	63	31
Denmark	59	29	41	10	8	18	22	20
Norway	58	36	45	22	18	39	39	27
Sweden	38	31	51	11	7	27	27	19
Iceland	79	71	82	18	11	51	64	44
North. Ireland	95	70	86	72	68	86	89	71
Ireland	96	78	85	53	50	85	84	70
East Germany	32	15	32	7	6	21	31	14
Hungary	58	23	13	18	15	24	36	25
Poland	95	62	72	29	35	66	83	65
Bulgaria	36	15	33	8	9	13	26	13
Czech Rep.	31	18	28	11	10	20	51	15
Slovak Rep.	64	41	47	25	27	39	60	38
Romania	89	48	68	38	37	50	71	42
Latvia	18	10	28	4	3	42	18	5
Total	60	36	50	20	19	35	48	29

The pattern found in the Netherlands is also a contradiction of what the religious market theorists predict. The religiously pluralistic situation in the Netherlands has not resulted in firm believers. On the contrary, the highest levels of religious faith are found in mono-religious countries like Ireland and Poland. It seems as if it is not Europe which is the exception, but America.

A pattern that is somewhat more strongly supported by the results is the distinction between Catholic and Protestant cultures. In general Protestant countries are less religious compared with Catholic countries. The Scandinavians are far less inclined to accept the faith items than people in Southern Catholic countries or in Poland, and Ireland. Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands are in between these extremes, but these countries are more pluralistic in the sense that Catholic and Protestant churches are both part of their cultures.

In Eastern Europe Catholic domination has not always resulted in higher levels of traditional belief. Czech Republic is a salient example in this respect. The situation in this country will be very different from what is observed in Poland where the Catholic church remained strong despite the communist regime. The church has always played an important role as 'the primary vehicle for political and cultural resistance to "outside" (communist) domination' (Doktór, 1996: 54). In general it can be concluded that 'where the church has been linked with recent national formation, religious beliefs and practices have maintained themselves much better than in other countries' (Therborn, 1995: 274). Poland, but also Ireland are clear examples in this respect as far as the Catholic church is concerned, and Romania as far as Orthodox church is concerned. The case of Eastern Germany can be seen as a result of a harshly sanctioning religious clergy in this country (Gautier, 1997: 291). As a result, 'the success of communist secularization was both striking and persistent' (Therborn, 1995: 292).

Belief in reincarnation was also part of the list of beliefs included in the questionnaire that was presented to the respondents. According to some, this belief maybe interpreted as an indication of new religious needs (e.g. Stoetzel, 1983: 95-96). At least, it is assumed, that re-incarnation is one of the few items in the European Values Study questionnaire referring to religiosity outside the official mode (Riis, 1994: 104). Statistical analyses show that belief in re-incarnation is of a different order than belief in the traditional statements. This is, of course, 'easily explicable, for it is not an explicitly Christian belief' (Harding et al., 1986: 48).

As Wilson and Dobbelaere have argued, in a context 'where there has developed a strong belief that only in this world is pleasure available, the desire to perpetuate or repeat earthly life has made conceptions of reincarnation increasingly congenial' (Wilson & Dobbelaere, 1994: 219). As a consequence it can be expected that the idea of re-incarnation was more widespread among more individualistic, more modern, most secularized people. However, belief in reincarnation is, however, not widespread, not even in most secular countries, for example East Germany, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark and Sweden. Contrary to what might have been expected, belief in reincarnation is strongest in Poland (32%), while it is 17% overall in Europe (see Figure 3.1).

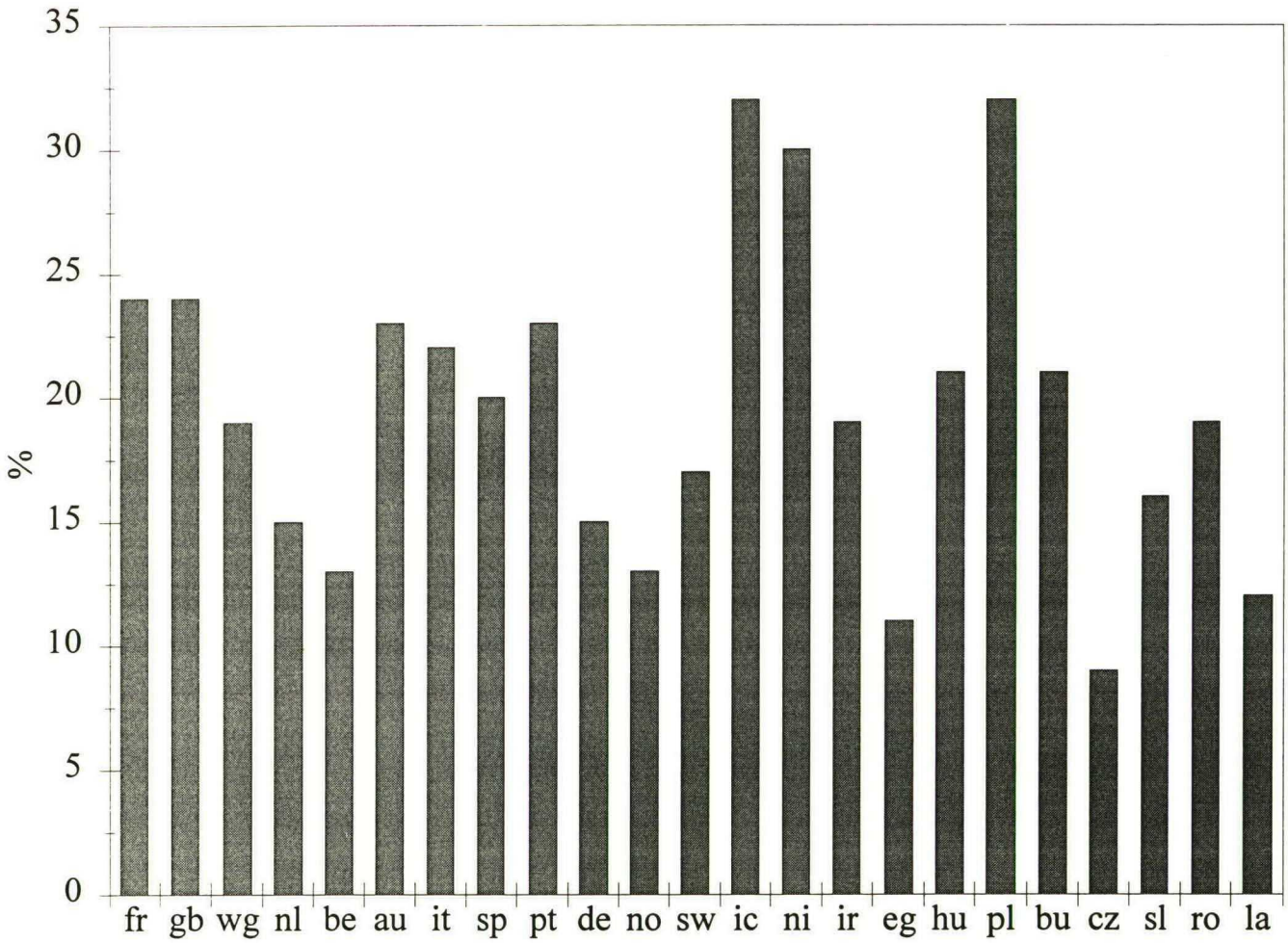

Figure 3.1 Proportions of respondents who believe in re-incarnation

As far as the Polish case is concerned, Doktór has observed that 'traditional and alternative religion seem to be equally strong' (Doktór, 1996: 54). The explanation for this result was not easy to find and the author suggested several interpretations. He argues that it could be the result of 'a greater inclusiveness of religious beliefs in Catholic and mono- religious countries, where, due to the absence of other religious alternatives, the religious identity is not so clearly defined and differentiated as in religiously pluralistic countries' (Doktór, 1996: 55). However, the mono-religious situation in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Ireland have not resulted in a similar widespread belief in re-incarnation. Also Doktór's suggestion that it may be attributed to the oppression of religion during the communist regime and that as a result of that 'all types of religion were mystified and gained support' (idem) does not seem to be corroborated by other Eastern European countries such as Eastern Germany and Czech Republic who experienced a similar oppressive regime, but where belief in reincarnation is rather limited. Belief in reincarnation in Eastern Germany is found among 11% of the respondents, and in the Czech Republic among 9%. The case of Eastern Germany not only opposes the view that a mono-religious situation is conducive to the development of a diversified belief system, but also the idea that the repression of religion by the former communist regime has resulted in an increase in alternative religious beliefs. Also the third alternative explanation forwarded by Doktór, seems to be challenged as well. He argues that adherence to alternative religions in Poland might be understood as 'a phenomenon fulfilling diversified individual religious needs in an otherwise monopolistic religious market' (Doktór, 1996: 55). Most other countries characterized by a monopolistic religious market display lower levels of belief in reincarnation and as such they demonstrate that this suggestion is not very convincing.

3.1.2 Religiosity

In *EVS*, respondents were asked how important God is in daily life, if one is a religious person, if one believes in either a personal God or a spirit force, if one finds comfort and strength from religion, and if one prays or meditates outside religious ceremonies. These items are indicative of a kind of religiosity that may even be applicable to people who do not belong to or feel attracted by one of the official churches. Such items reveal a subjective religious disposition or 'diffuse religiosity' (Riis, 1994: 105), that is 'concerned with religious experiences, those feelings, perceptions, and sensations which are experienced by an actor or defined by a religious group (or a society) as involving some communication, however slight, with a divine essence, that is, with God, with ultimate reality, with transcendental authority' (Stark & Glock, 1968: 15). Table 3.2 reports on the empirical findings, revealing significant cross-national variations in religious patterns.

As was observed with respect to the responses to the traditional Christian religious belief statements, the answer pattern within each country is more or less similar on all indicators of diffuse or personal religiosity or emotional religious disposition. An exception to this general rule is personal prayer in Iceland, which deviates more from the European mean than the other indicators deviate from the mean European pattern. In Norway a reverse situation can be observed. Here people appear less religious, but they are more likely to pray or meditate.

Although the deviations from the overall means varies from country to country, it is more or less clear that Swedes, Bulgarians, Eastern Germans, and Czech people, appear less religious on all items compared with other Europeans in general, and Polish, Irish, and Italians in particular. Somewhat unexpected is the proportion of Irish people that answered affirmatively to the question: Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are a religious person? The Irish response (72%) resembles the responses in Portugal (68%) and Austria (69%), but also the response rates in Denmark (68%), Romania (74%), Slovakia (69%), and Iceland (74%), whereas in general one might have expected that Irish people would resemble the Poles and people in Southern Europe. Relatively large numbers of Irish people report that they are not a religious person (about 27%). Denmark represents an exceptional case too, for 68% of its citizens consider themselves religious persons, which is more than twice as many as in Sweden (29%). On other measures, however, Denmark is close to the Swedish pattern.

While religiosity may be less widespread among the Swedes, Eastern Germans, French, Norwegians, Bulgarians and Czech people, this does not imply that there are large numbers of atheists in these countries. The proportions of people reporting that they are convinced atheists is rather limited in Europe. The highest proportion is found in Eastern Germany (17%). Overall in Europe it is about 5%. Thus, despite the fact that about one in every three Europeans does not consider him/herself a religious person, about 90% of them are not convinced atheists.

However, the use of the word 'religious' may be confusing and widely misunderstood. This appears in the answers to the question on the content of people's beliefs. Respondents were asked: 'Which of the following statements comes closest to your beliefs'. The statements were:

Table 3.2 **Proportions of respondents who is religious, who believes in a 'personal God', who gets comfort from religion, who takes moments of prayer and for whom God is important in their lives (score 8-10 on 10-point scale: 1 = not important; 10 = very important)**

	Religious person	Belief in personal God	Get comfort from religion	Moments of prayer	Importance of God (8-10)
France	48	20	33	45	19
Britain	54	32	44	53	26
West Germany	54	24	37	62	29
Netherlands	59	28	43	67	28
Belgium	61	29	42	53	28
Austria	69	28	47	59	41
Italy	82	66	65	74	53
Spain	63	50	53	61	38
Portugal	68	61	62	61	50
Denmark	68	19	26	43	13
Norway	45	29	30	63	23
Sweden	29	15	23	33	14
Iceland	74	51	71	46	35
Northern Ireland	71	66	75	76	63
Ireland	72	67	82	84	65
East Germany	32	13	26	46	20
Hungary	54	39	45	57	34
Poland	90	78	72	86	74
Bulgaria	32	10	27	30	16
Czech Rep.	37	11	24	32	17
Slovak Rep.	69	33	46	60	41
Romania	73	36	71	85	58
Estonia	19	6	-	-	-
Latvia	34	10	10	25	8
Lithuania	47	20	-	-	-
Total	56	33	42	53	31

Table 3.3 **Percentages of the non-religious respondents that believe in a personal God, a spirit or life force, who do not know what to believe in and who do not believe in a personal God or life force, by country (number of non-religious people in brackets)**

Country (N)	believe in a personal God	believe in spirit or life force	does not know what to believe	does not believe
France (362)	8	317	355	249
Great Britain (560	114	437	269	180
West Germany (555)	32	393	286	290
East Germany (496)	9	108	207	677
Austria (218)	54	436	261	249
Italy (210)	177	424	188	211
Spain (735)	253	379	233	134
Portugal (295)	225	333	255	187
Netherlands (339)	24	420	225	331
Belgium (610)	75	77	537	310
Denmark (222)	14	171	300	516
Norway (582)	110	375	348	167
Sweden (587)	61	452	244	244
Iceland (159)	127	484	268	121
N. Ireland (83)	386	349	217	48
Ireland (266)	425	417	128	30
Hungary (376)	52	90	351	507
Poland (25)	160	280	480	80
Bulgaria (509)	27	251	185	537
Czech Rep. (999)	12	315	297	376
Slovak Rep. (183)	6	175	223	596
Romania (263)	139	459	324	77
Estonia (671)	14	505	293	188
Latvia (241)	9	419	273	300
Lithuania (353)	44	371	297	288

1. There is a personal God
2. There is some sort of spirit or life force
3. I don't really know what to think
4. I don't think there is any sort of spirit, God or life force.

It is remarkable that even among those who did not consider themselves religious, over two-fifths (about 43%) claimed to believe in a 'personal God' or spirit or life force (Table 3.3). Apparently, they are believers, but they do not want to be seen as religious. Maybe that for many people 'religious' is associated with clergy (priests etc.) and therefore people do not want to consider themselves as religious. In Ireland this is the pattern found frequently. 74% and 84% respectively of the non-religious people in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, respectively, claim that they believe in either a personal God or a spirit force.

As far as the content of belief is concerned, secularization and individualization are assumed to have moved society 'from some sacred condition to successively secular conditions in which the sacred evermore recedes' (Hammond, 1985: 1). In particular those beliefs that are at the core of institutional, traditional Christian religiosity will be affected by these modernization processes. The traditional Christian doctrine 'identifies God as the agent who governs life. God is assumed to have a purpose for each person's life' (Wuthnow, 1976: 3-4). In Christianity, God is regarded the ultimate source of meaning and interpretation. As expected, adherence to this view is no longer dominant in the Scandinavian countries, Eastern Germany and Czech Republic, the highly secularized societies. The belief in a personal God hardly exists in these countries or in Bulgaria. However, apart from Eastern Germany, in these countries some kind of belief in an ultimate reality is found in one in every three citizens. It seems reasonable to draw the conclusion that even in a secularized world, the sacred seems to be remarkably alive (Hammond, 1985). In East Germany, almost half of the population does not believe in a God or spirit or life force. In no other country is this denial of an extra-empirical reality so widespread. This maybe attributed to the severe repression of religion by the Soviet authorities. 'Repression of religious expression,..., may have been especially harsh in East Germany, the model of Soviet society to the West' (Gautier, 1997: 292).

The impact of Soviet anti-religious rule, may also explain the results obtained in some of the other Central and Eastern European societies: Hungary and the Czech Republic. However, the observations in Slovakia and Romania do not confirm these ideas. Nihilism, the rejection of the existence of a God or life force, is not frequently found here. On the other hand it is a pattern that is more frequently found in Bulgaria (34%). So, Soviet domination is no the only

source of explanation for a specific pattern of belief in Eastern and Central Europe. The cross-national differences appear too great to justify the conclusion that the countries in Eastern and Central Europe have developed a distinctive religious model as a consequence of the period of Soviet domination.

3.1.3 The world views of Europeans

The conclusion that belief in a supernatural power or life force is still remarkably alive in present European society, does not imply, however, that people still desire to explain and understand the origin and meaning of human life and the cosmos in the context of a transcendent and supernatural order. According to the prevalent theory on secularization the theistic view has declined in importance and adherence. Such a view can be described as 'an understanding of life that identifies God as the agent who governs life. God is assumed to have a purpose for each person's life' (Wuthnow, 1976: 3-4). It is the view that God is the source of meaning and interpretation. The *EVS* data seem to confirm this idea. Most Europeans do not refer to God when asked about the meaning of life and death. Instead most people regard issues of life, death and suffering as just 'natural events' which have a meaning in themselves. Large majorities of the Europeans (three-quarters and more) agree with statements like:
- the meaning of life is that you try to get the best out of it (76%);
- death is inevitable; it is pointless to worry about it (74%);
- if you have lived your life, death is a natural resting point (79%).
Agreement with theistic views is much lower than agreement with these immanentist views.

The theistic view appears in the items:
- life is meaningful because God exists (30%);
- death has a meaning only if you believe in God (29%);
- in my opinion, sorrow and suffering only have a meaning if you believe in God (25%).

As can be observed in Figure 3.2, Europe is not homogeneous in these world views, not only with regard to the 'new', non-traditional, immanentist world views, but also with respect to the theistic views.

However, a general pattern seems to be that the theistic world view is more dominant in the traditional religious (Catholic) countries. People in Poland, Ireland, followed by people in Southern Europe, and Slovakia appear more in favour of the theistic view than other populations. The lowest numbers of adherents are found in the Netherlands, Belgium, the Nordic

countries, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and the Baltic states: Latvia and Estonia.

A general conclusion seems to be that a theistic view is not limited to one issue or life event, but is related to various life events. The same pattern exists in the opposite direction; non-acceptance is not limited to one domain, but occurs with respect to other domains as well. The mean inter-item correlation between these items is .51, and Cronbach's alpha indicated that the reliability of a scale with these items is high (α = .76). The answers to the indicators of the immanentist view are less in the same direction (mean inter-item correlation = .27; α = .52). Nevertheless we have combined the answers to these immanentist items in one scale.

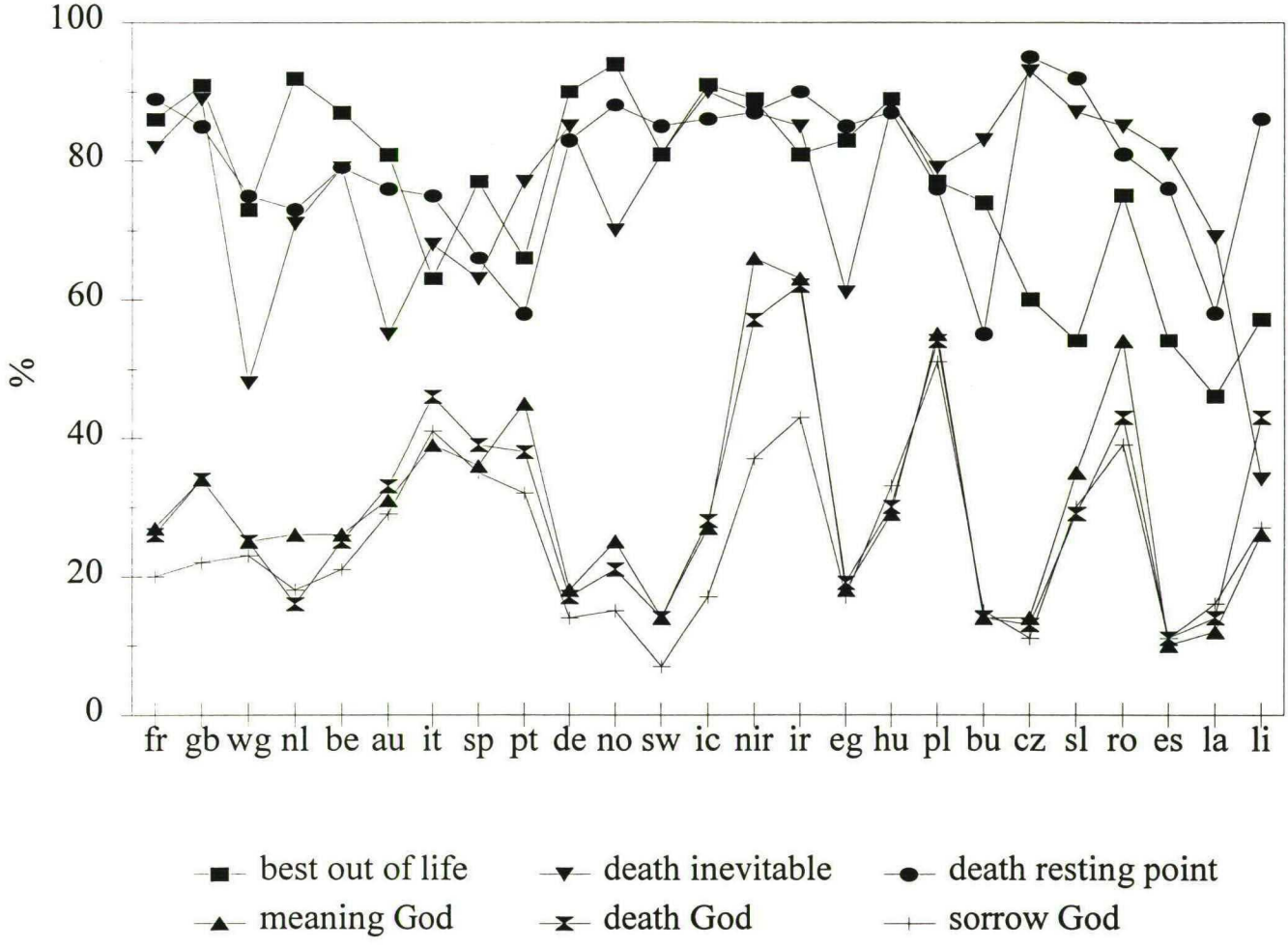

Figure 3.2 **Proportions of respondents agreeing with the statement that the meaning of life is to get the best out of it; that death is inevitable; that death is a natural resting point; that life has meaning because God exists; that death has meaning because God exists; that suffering has meaning if one believes in God**

In the three German speaking countries (East and West Germany and Austria), there appears to be a discrepancy between the views on death as a natural resting point and trying to get the best out of your life, on the one hand, and the viewpoint that it is pointless to worry about death, on the other hand. The latter viewpoint is accepted less than the two other statements. Lithuanian people appear least of all adhering to this view on the meaning and interpretation of life.

Although theistic views are more widespread in Poland and Ireland compared with other countries, even in these countries there is widespread agreement with the statements revealing the immanentist view. In the Czech Republic as well as in Slovakia, people are inclined to accept almost unanimously that death is inevitable and merely a natural resting point, but to a much lesser extent are they of the opinion that the meaning of life is that you try to get the best out of it. People in the three Baltic states as well as in Bulgaria, resemble the Czechs and Slovak people in their interpretation of the meaning of life. However, this view is not typical for Eastern Europe, for in Poland, Eastern Germany and in Hungary in particular people are much more favourable to the viewpoint that you have to get the best out of life.

3.1.4 Cross national similarities and differences in religious profiles

An overview of the main cross-national similarities and differences in religiousness can be obtained from a cluster analysis[2] of the countries on the basis of religious indicators we have explored thus far. The analysis yielded four clusters of countries. Cluster 1 comprises Spain, Portugal, Austria, Slovakia, West Germany and Latvia; cluster 2: Great Britain, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Hungary and France; cluster 3 combines East Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Denmark; cluster 4 contains Northern Ireland, Ireland, Italy, Romania and Poland. These results do not reveal a clear patterning of countries: Europe's map of religiousness is rather confusing. There is no uniform Eastern and Central European model, nor is there a clear discernible Nordic or Southern European pattern, nor a clear Catholic-Protestant differentiation. What is revealed, however, is that secularization has not occurred throughout Europe at a similar pace. In fact, the results of our analyses thus far, refute the idea of Therborn that the Nordic pattern is similar to the Eastern pattern. He noted that 'the Nordic countries,...., turn out rather similar to Eastern Europe, in particular to the non-Catholic parts of the latter' (Therborn, 1995: 274). In Figure 3.3 the countries' mean scores on religiosity and traditional belief are displayed in two dimensional space.

Sweden is indeed close to Czech Republic, Bulgaria and East Germany, but Norway and Denmark are at a distance of these countries. Besides, Sweden and the other Nordic countries are Lutheran, while the Bulgarians are mainly Orthodox. It may be that, indeed, as noted before, the non-religious attitudes of people in the three Eastern European countries can be attributed to Soviet anti-religious policies. The Swedish exceptional position, however, cannot be attributed to this influence. According to Susan Sundback, the non-religious orientation of the Swedes can be explained from a variety of historical and contextual reasons. One of these factors is the early 'desacralisation' of the public world-view caused by the unparalleled strong position of the Social Democratic political party in Sweden. This political party took over the power from the Lutheran Churches to define meaning and the interpretation of social life. Further, she argues, the Swedish political, intellectual and cultural climate has been highly pragmatic for a long period of time, and this climate was not very conducive to the maintenance and development of religious feelings (Sundback, 1994: 148).

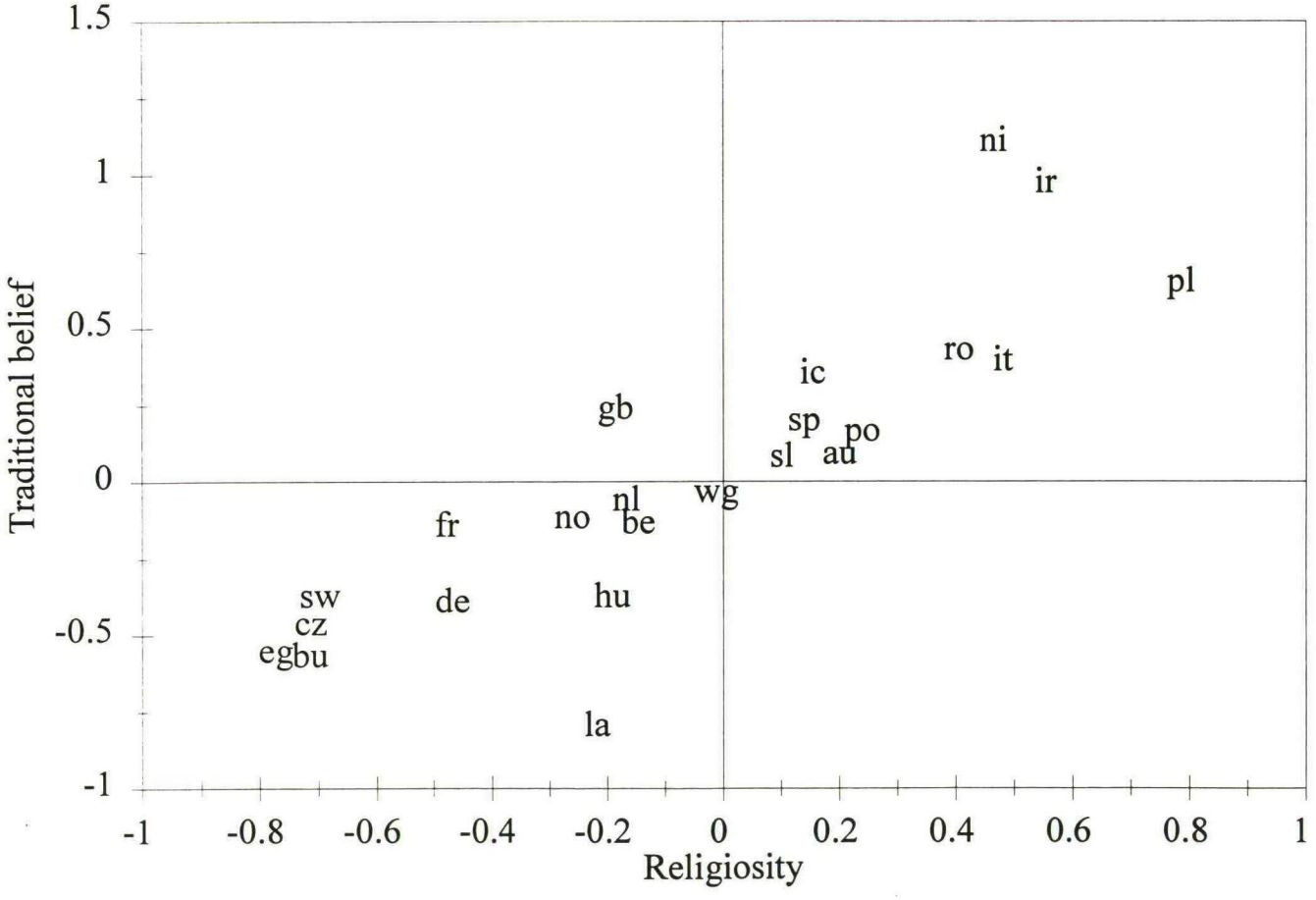

Figure 3.3 Countries' mean scores on religiosity and traditional belief

It is clear that secularization and individualization have affected Polish and Irish society to a much lesser extent than other countries. Religiosity has remained at a high level in these Catholic countries and this religiosity is still mainly traditional. The pattern as far as transcendental and immanentist views are concerned is far from clear either, although some evidence can be found for a Catholic-Protestant divide in Europe (see Figure 3.4).

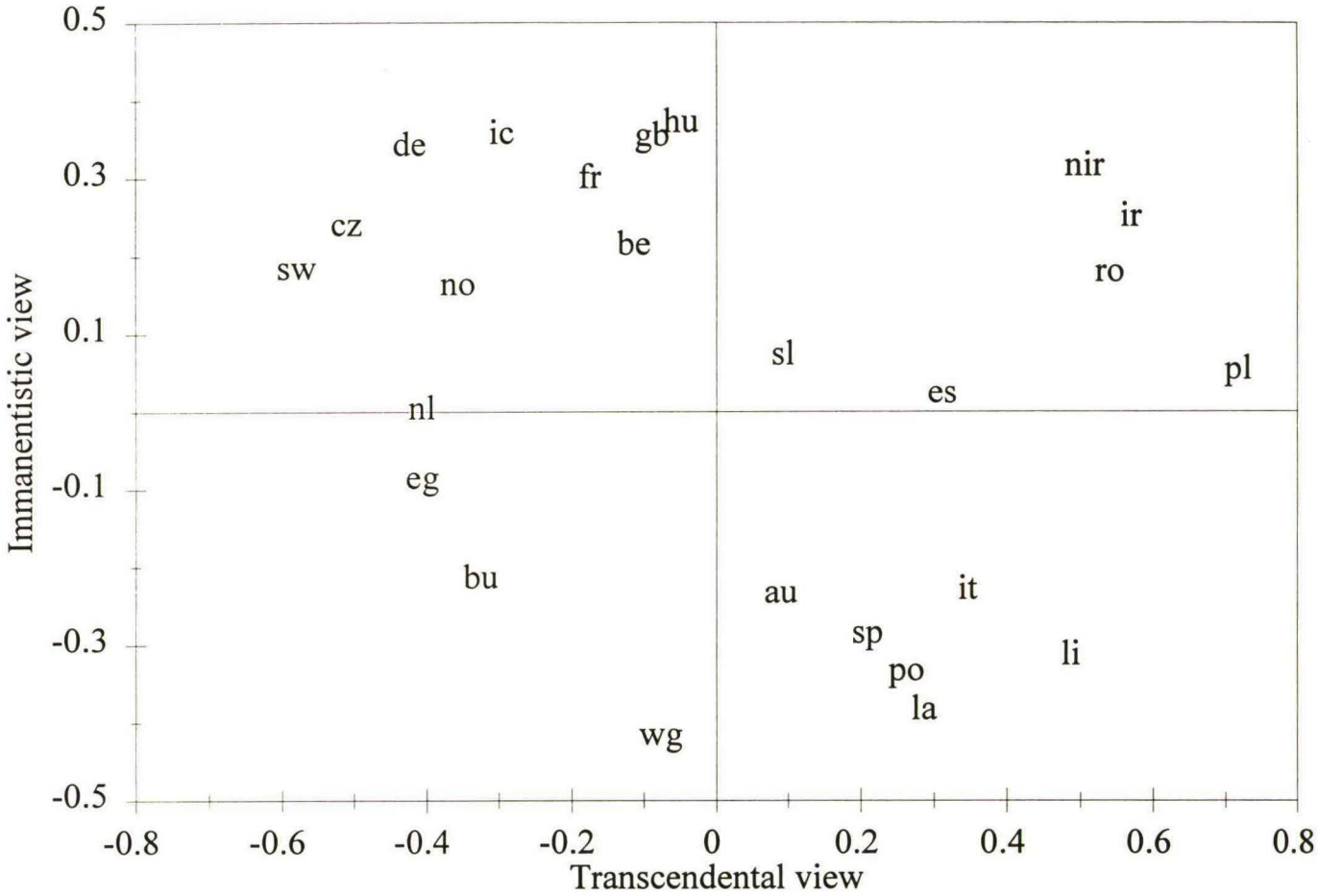

Figure 3.4 Countries' mean scores on transcendental and immanentist world views

If the immanentist view represents an alternative for the traditional theistic view, it could have been expected that this view was more widespread in the Nordic, more secularized countries. But as has been observed, such a view is equally popular in highly traditional religious countries like Poland and Ireland. As far as the transcendental orientation is concerned, the idea that this view will be less widespread in more secularized countries, can be confirmed. Indeed such a view prevails in the tradional countries like Ireland, Poland and Romania. But in case of the immanentist view, the pattern is highly confusing, because even in the most traditional believing countries, this view is as dominant as in the most secular countries.

The results yield some evidence that religion is still a relevant factor for shaping the world views of Europeans. Catholic countries like Austria, Italy, Spain, and Portugal appear as opposites of Protestant countries like Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway. The transcendental view prevails in these Catholic countries, while the immantist view is less accepted. People in the Protestant countries are more in favour of the immantist view, while they hardly adhere to the transcendental views. However, Czech Republic resembles the Nordic countries, while the patterns of the Baltic States are highly similar to the pattern of Southern Catholic Europe. The fact that Ireland and Poland do not fit in the Catholic pattern of Southern Europe, seems to suggest that other factors than religious traditions are more important.

3.1.5 Homogeneity of religious beliefs and world views?

As we have argued in Section 2 of this chapter, due to increasing individualization, people have become free and autonomous in selecting the convictions, beliefs, and practices they want. Decisions are no longer based on what the religious institutions prescribe, but what the individual wants. People are assumed to pick and choose what they want from the global religious and cultural marketplace. In other words, in modern globalized society, people's beliefs will be increasingly diverse and fragmented. 'Since cultural and social diversity are the distinguishing characteristics of modern life, individuals or groups in the global village can choose their religious orientations from a variety of options rather than simply accepting the specific sacred canopy transmitted to them by their family and friends in early childhood' (Kurtz, 1995: 12). In this regard, the increased "supply" of alternative world views and value systems, provided not least by the ever growing mass media and international information technologies, will be a crucial factor. When people are increasingly free to choose from an enlarged pool of religious and moral options, the homogeneity in peoples' religio-moral value systems will almost by statistical necessity decrease. Increasing numbers of people will demonstrate their own, individual religious patchworks.

The degree of religious homo- or heterogeneity can easily be assessed by the standard deviations for the various dimensions of religious beliefs. The larger these standard deviations, the more a populations varies in their opinions. If all people in a country believe in a similar way, there is no variety and thus the standard deviation is 0. If people do not share similar religious beliefs, the variety is high and thus the standard deviation will be high too. So, the more varied a population, the higher the standard deviation; while if 'the homogeneity of a group is large, the smaller the standard deviation' (Jagodzinski & Dobbelaere, 1995b: 226). In Figure 3.5 these standard deviations are displayed.

The expectation that the more modernized and globalized a country is, the more divers its religious pattern will be, can not be substantiated by these data. In most countries, even in the more modern, globalized parts of Europe, populations appear rather homogeneous in their religious beliefs or non-beliefs.

The populations of Eastern Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Belgium appear less homogeneous compared with other European populations as far as variations in religiosity is concerned. The population of Latvia is rather homogeneous in (non-) belief in the traditional religious dogmas, while the populations of Italy, Norway, and Slovakia appear more diverse in their religious beliefs.

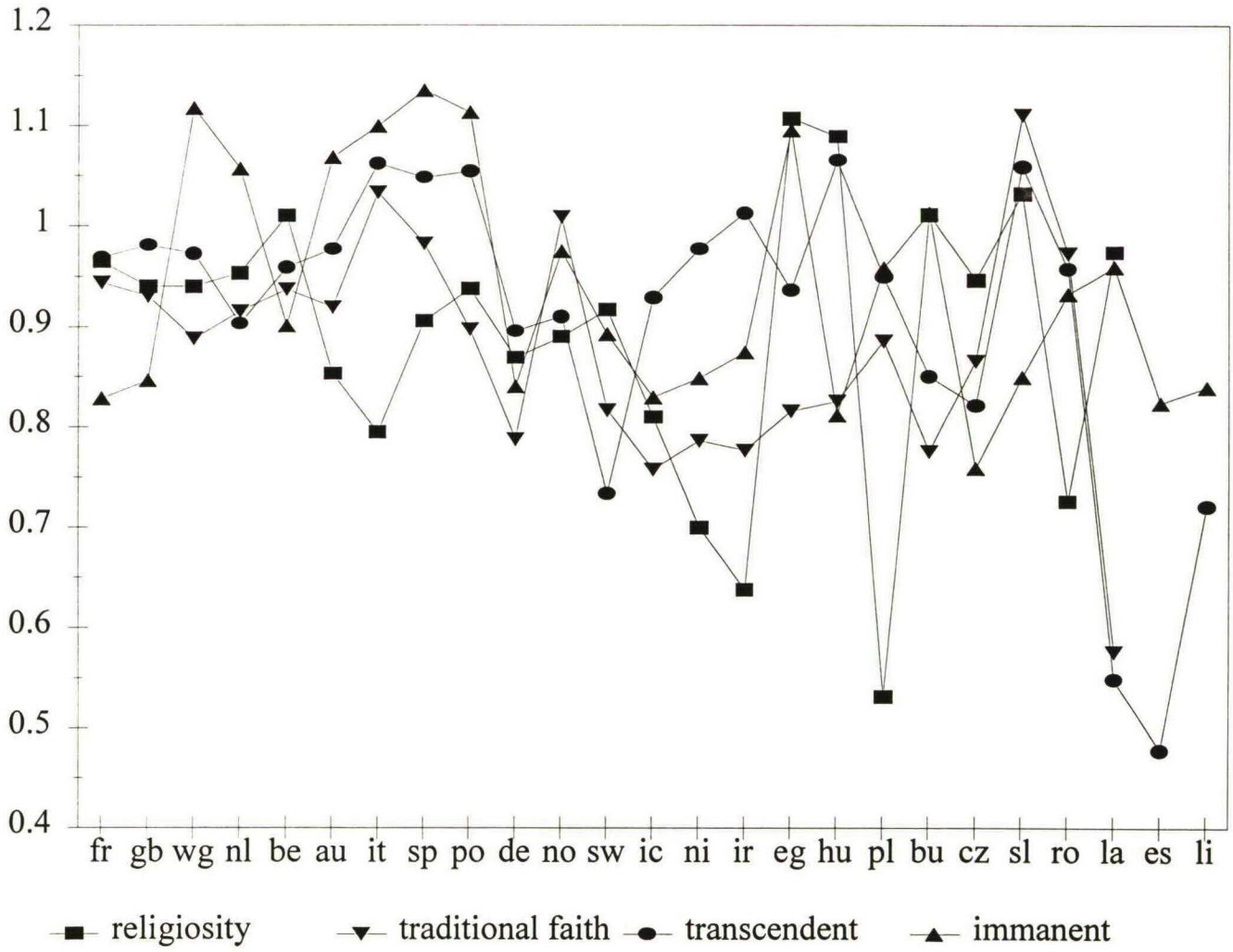

Figure 3.5 Countries' standard deviations from the mean scores on religiosity, traditional belief, transcendental and immanentist world views

There is also not a discernable trend of homogeneity in traditional belief and heterogeneity in modern belief or the other way around. The pattern that emerged is hard to interpret and cannot be understood in terms of a North-South, East West divide or in terms of Catholic-Protestant identity/affiliation. What can be concluded is that in general the deviations from the mean are rather limited in most countries and thus most populations in Europe appear as rather homogeneous in their world views and religious orientations.

The preliminary conclusion from this overview is that religious beliefs vary within Europe to a substantial extent. The more religious countries not only display higher levels of religiousness in terms of personal religious beliefs, but also in terms of traditional faith. Further, the populations in these countries appear most homogeneous. However, contrary to what could have been expected, even in least religious countries, people appear rather homogeneous in their disbelief and rejection of traditional belief. It seems as if in these more secular parts of Europe, secularization has spread all over the population and that it is not limited to specific parts of the population. It seems as if Soviet socialization over 40 years was rather effective.

3.2 Religious practices

Religiousness measured in terms of beliefs is, of course, just one way of exploring an individual's religiousness. Religion is, according to one of the founding fathers of sociology 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community...' (Durkheim, 1965: 62). Religious practices or 'acts of worship and devotion, the things people *do* to carry out their religious commitment' (Stark & Glock, 1968: 15), are other expressions of religion. This dimension can be measured in various ways, for example by church membership and actual participation in church activities. The empirical findings on church attendance suggest that the uniting force of the churches has been lost for most people and even for a large part of the church community itself. We start this section with acts of worship followed by more attitudinal measures of people's adherence to institutional religiosity.

3.2.1 Worship

Church attendance is the most frequently used instrument to measuring religious practices, and in many countries levels of church attendance have decreased. The decrease that has occurred during the eighties is further explored in Section 5. Here we will compare the levels of church attendance in 1990 in countries in Eastern and Western Europe. As a measure of

secularisation it is immedately clear from figures on regular church attendance, that the Nordic countries in Europe are highly secularized; around 10% of the populations in these countries regularly (that is at least once a month) attend a religious service, while people in Southern European countries are much less secularized according to church attendance figures. The highest figures on church involvement is found, however, in two Catholic countries: Ireland and Poland. Here very large majorities go to church frequently (84% and 88% respectively). The Bulgarian pattern resembles the Nordic one, but it deviates from the pattern of church attendance observed in Rumania, although both are primarily Orthodox countries; Church attendance is rather low in Bulgaria (9%), whereas it is modest (about 30%) in Romania.

As a secular ideology, individualism was expected to have been conducive to decreasing levels of church going. In some countries individualization even led to leaving the church one was born into. Until recently it was common that from their birth on, children belonged to the denomination their parents belonged to. In the Netherlands a sharp distinction existed for a long time in history between Catholics and Protestants milieus. This situation is famous as pillarization. There was a Catholic pillar that differed from a Protestant pillar. Belonging to a Catholic pillar implied that a person grew up in a Catholic family, that he/she went to a Catholic school, that he/she became member of a Catholic youth organization, that he/she went to a Catholic University, that he/she was employed in a Catholic enterprise with a Catholic employer, that he/she belonged to a Catholic labour Union, that he/she went to a Catholic hospital, that he/she voted on Catholic political parties etc. etc. Protestants grew up and lived in Protestant milieu that was separated and segregated from Catholic milieu. Meanwhile a process of depolarisation has removed most of this typical Dutch pattern and many people in the Netherlands do not any longer want to be part of either the Catholic or Protestant church. Half of the Dutch population is unchurched, a proportion unparalleled in Western Europe, not even in the Nordic secular countries.

In fact, church affiliation in the Nordic countries is rather high (Figure 3.6). Almost all people in the four Scandinavian countries consider themselves a member of the Lutheran church. This phenomenon of high levels of church membership may be understood from the connection between Church and state in these countries. In Scandinavia 'there exists an historically determined connection between church and state, and (....) citizenship implied church membership' (Gustafsson, 1994: 21). People in the Nordic countries entered into the Lutheran church by birth (Lane & Ersson, 1996: 184), and being a church member is considered almost a citizen's duty in these cultures and as such church membership can be seen as a way of

expressing solidarity with society and it's basic values (Hamberg, 1990: 39). However, since the level of actual participation is rather low in the Nordic countries, membership in these countries will be less meaningful religiously than in other countries.

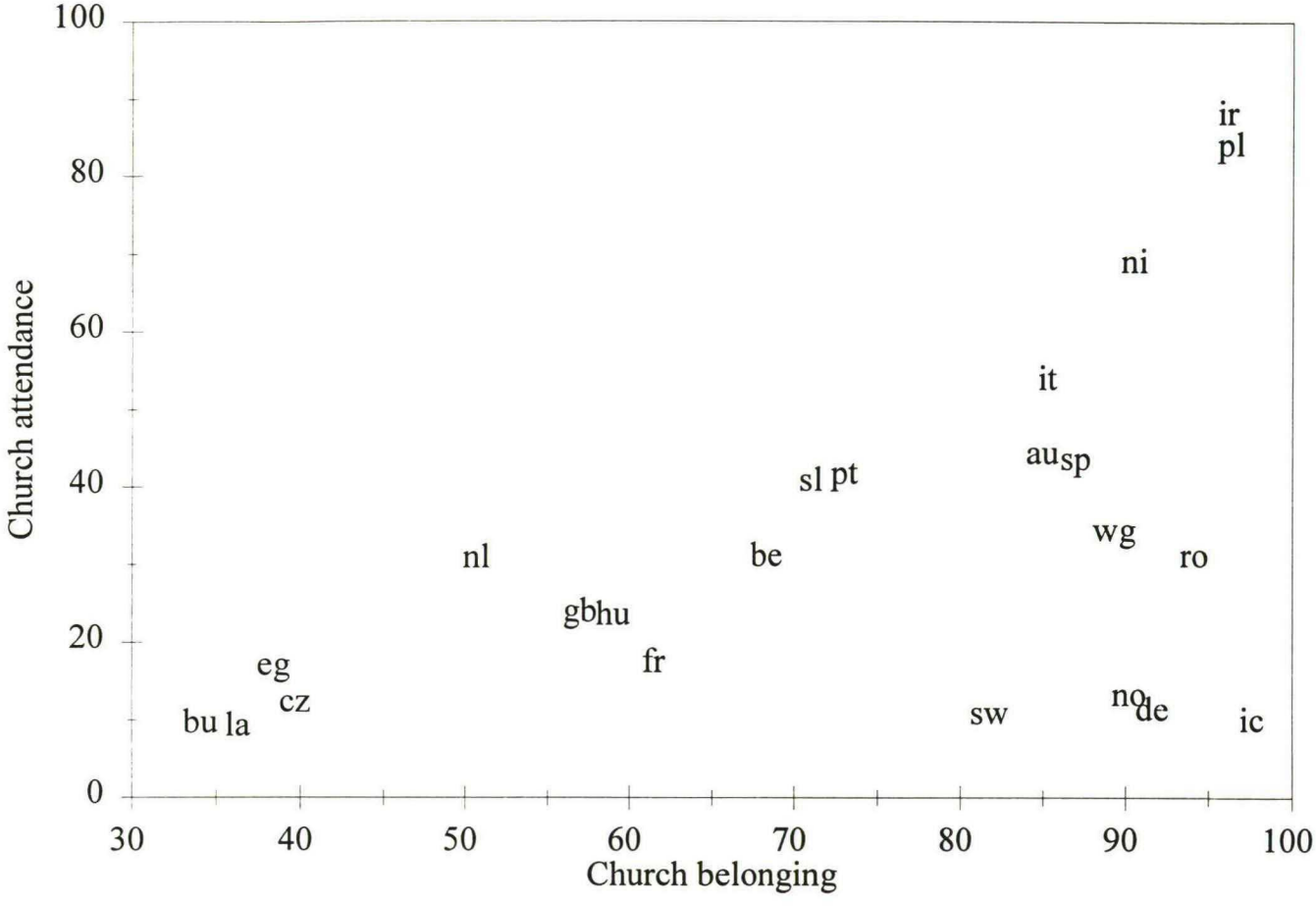

Figure 3.6 Proportions of respondents attending religious services regularly (at least once a month) and belonging to a denomination

A clear Eastern European pattern is lacking, for in some countries church affiliation appears high (Poland, Romania, Slovakia), in other countries it is rather low (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia). Hungary and Lithuania display intermediate positions. This variation can hardly be explained from social repression during Soviet domination, although the low rates in Eastern Germany, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, seem to confirm the severe impact of secular Soviet rule in the recent past. In Slovakia, Poland, and Romania, communist leadership has apparently not been very successful in paralysing the churches.

Rather peculiar is the clear demarcation in participation and affiliation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This may very well reflect differential stages of economic development and modernization, and differences in social-historical experiences. As Inglehart suggests, the main feature of modernization is economic growth through industrialization (Inglehart, 1997: 70). The Czech Republic has been more advanced economically and industrially than its Slovak neighbour country, and thus secularization will have advanced more in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia.

Apart from Poland, Ireland and Northern Ireland, the rather high levels of church affiliation is not parallelled with high levels of church attendance. As far as an individual's religious attachment is concerned, the Eastern European pattern resembles the Nordic pattern of a low degree of active church involvement. The Polish and Irish pattern of church involvement is highly similar. Figures on church attendance appear rather similar in the Southern European countries, Austria and Slovakia, but these countries vary slightly in terms of proportions of church membership which appears high in Spain, Italy, an Austria, and relatively low in Slovakia and Portugal.

3.2.2 Institutional religious attitudes

Apart from these concrete behaviours, *EVS* contains several indicators of what can be called institutional religious attitudes. A first set of indicators measures the degree to which people consider religious ceremonies important for marked transitions in human life, such as birth, marriage and death. Further, there are some indicators available about the role of the church in contemporary society. As was explained before, an important aspect of secularization is the assumed decline of the role the churches play in modern secular society. The degree to which people are of the opinion that the churches should speak out on various issues is one aspect; another is the degree to which people consider the churches and their leaders important sources for answers to social, moral and familial problems and spiritual needs.

3.2.2.1. Rites of passage

Religion offers ceremonies to mark important passages in human life, such as, birth, marriage and death. The proportions of people considering a religious ceremony meaningful for such events[3] are presented in Figure 3.7. Although the meaningfulness of religious services varies for the separate occasions, generally speaking there is a tendency to regard such a service in the case of death as more important than in the case of birth or marriage. Even in Eastern

Germany, where fewer than 40% consider a religious service necessary at birth and for a marriage, a (small) majority say that a religious service is necessary at death. Relatively large differences between death on the one hand and marriage and birth on the other, appear distinctive in the Scandinavian countries. A religious ceremony at death is more widely accepted than a religious service at birth or marriage. The Dutch and Czech patterns are highly similar, and together with Eastern Germany, the people in these countries are least convinced that a religious ceremony on the occasions of birth, marriage and death are necessary.

Despite these cross-national variations and the fact that the acceptance depends upon the occasion, it will be clear that most Europeans regard events like birth, marriage and death sufficiently significant to merit a religious ceremony. Such widespread acceptance seems contradictory to the low levels of church involvement in terms of church attendance. However, it must be acknowledged that participation in such religious ceremonies is not necessarily an expression of religious involvement. It rather reveals that the number of alternatives to mark such important transitions in human life is limited (Dobbelaere & Voye, 1992: 128), and that it is more or less a habit or a national custom to have religious ceremonies on such occasions without further motivation or reflection. This is clear from the large proportions of people who do not or hardly ever go to church, but nevertheless think that religious services are important at birth, marriage and death. Even among those who have left the church most are convinced about the importance of such ceremonies. As such, religious services on these occasions have become part of a more general culture, devoid of religious meaning for a large part of the population. The latter explanation seems likely because the percentages of those who stick to the rites of passage greatly exceed the proportions of those who see themselves as religious persons. Countries vary in the proportion of people to whom these rites are likely to be devoid of religious meaning. Not only are there countries in which some of the unchurched stick to the rites, there are also countries in which a considerable proportion of even church members attach little or no value to them. This last finding applies to the Nordic countries and to West Germany, which justifies the conclusion that a large part of the 55% marginal church members in the latter country have actually broken away from their church.

3.2.2.2. The role of the church(es)

According to the prevailing ideas on modernization, secularization and individualization, institutional religiosity in particular has diminished and the role of religion and the churches in society has been reduced to a specialized institution and above all a highly private affair. And as Luckmann argues, in modern society 'the individual is more likely to confront the

culture and the sacred cosmos as a "buyer". Once religion is defined as a "private affair" the individual may choose from the assortment of "ultimate" meanings as he sees fit - guided by the preferences that are determined by his social biography' (Luckmann, 1967: 99).

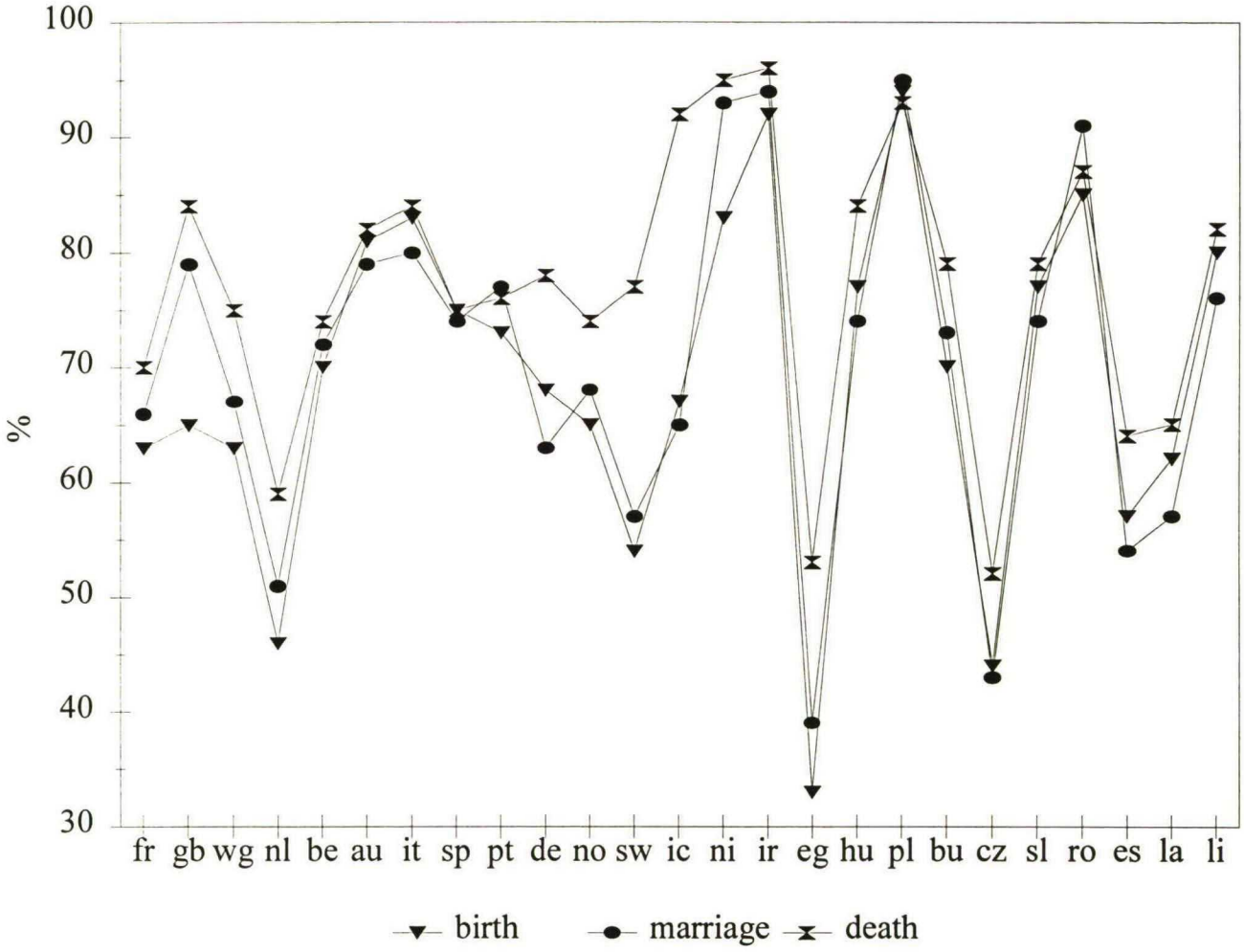

Figure 3.7 Proportions of respondents who are of the opinion that religious services are important at birth, marriage and death

Thus, the expectation can be forwarded that the more modern, secular and individualized countries will display lower levels of church oriented attitudes. The number of people attracted by the doctrines and prescriptions of the traditional churches will be low in such modern cultures. However, country specific features will have a significant impact on the role of the churches in a society. For example, in Eastern Europe 'religion happened to be the only

source of counter-culture in the communist era which had an effect on every social stratum. (...) Since that time there has been no other agency of comparable size undertaking the role of preserving and transmitting national culture and basic values' (Tomka, 1995: 20). In the Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, the impact of the churches is rather limited; the churches, for example, do not get involved in political debate. 'It is not legitimate to enter political discussions, about the policy of the government or about vital social problems such as unemployment' (Riis, 1992: 3). As such, a clear distinction can be expected to exist between the countries in Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries.

In *EVS*, people were asked if it was proper for churches to speak out on a great number of issues ranging from disarmament, unemployment and third world problems to abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia[4]. The answers seem to indicate what people consider to be the role of the church in contemporary society, and a two dimensional pattern appears. One dimension concerns the public or social issues, such as disarmament, third world problems, unemployment, racial discrimination, ecology and environmental issues, and government policy; the other dimension combines the private issues: abortion, extramarital affairs, euthanasia, and homosexuality.

Most accepted, and in most countries even highly accepted, is that churches speak out on third world problems and discrimination (see Figure 3.8). Belgium and Denmark display lower levels of acceptance, but even in these countries a majority considers it appropriate for churches to speak out on these issues. Contrary to what might have been expected, Polish people are not the most likely to consider that it is proper for churches to speak out on such public issues. The same applies in the case of the Polish response to private issues which does not rank highest compared with other countries. In all countries investigated here, only small minorities think it is proper for churches to speak out on government policy. This is even the case in Eastern European countries, despite the fact that, as Tomka has argued, the church was seen as playing an oppositional role in these countries. Our data reveal that this is only the case in Eastern Germany, for only in this country do more than half of the respondents say it is proper for churches to speak out on government policy. In other countries, including those in Eastern Europe, the proportions are much lower. The suggestion offered by Riis for the Nordic countries is supported, although the percentages found in these countries are not the lowest observed in Europe. France, Belgium, Austria, Portugal and Slovakia display the lowest proportions of people who think that it is proper for churches to speak out on government policy.

Variations between countries also exist with regard to the sexual-ethical issues, such as abortion, extramarital affairs, euthanasia and homosexuality (Figure 3.9). The Irish are most of all of the opinion that churches should speak out on such issues, particularly with respect to abortion and euthanasia (around 80%). Here a significant difference between Irish and Polish societies appears. Although large majorities in Poland feel that churches should speak out on such issues, these proportions are lower than in Ireland. Lowest acceptance of churches to speak out on such issues is found in France and Slovakia. In Slovakia about 19% of the respondents consider it appropriate for the churches to speak out on homosexuality. In France, Belgium, and Iceland it is around 25% of the respondents that shares this opinion. Further, it is remarkable that such a large majority in East Germany find it proper for churches to speak out on euthanasia. 70% of the East Germans is of this opinion, which is almost twice as much as the proportion found in Slovakia.

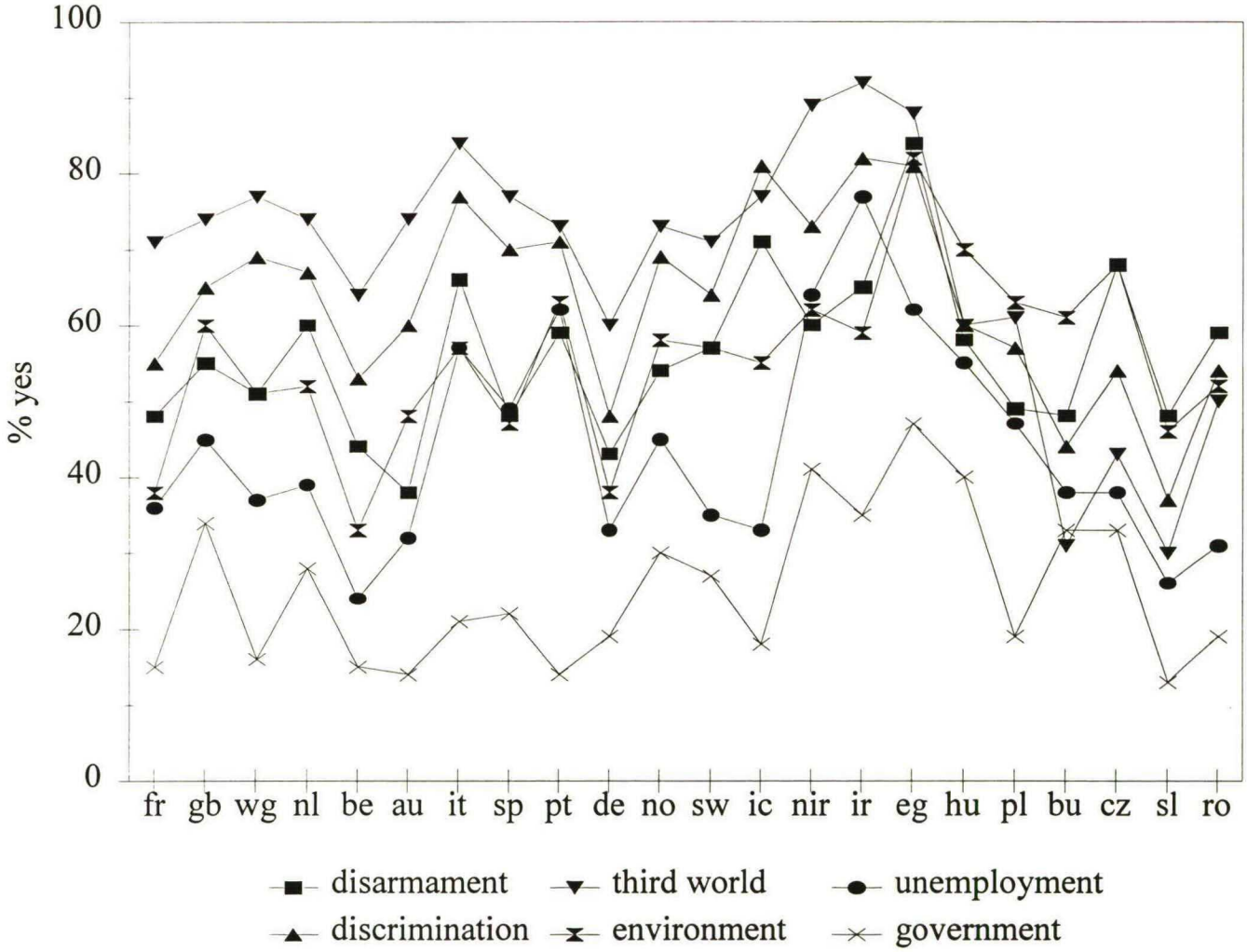

Figure 3.8 **Proportions of respondents sharing the opinion that churches should speak out on disarmament, third world problems, unemployment, discrimination, environmental issues, and governmental policy**

The large variations in response rates, not only between countries, but also between the issues mentioned, make it difficult to draw conclusions. We therefore have applied factor analysis, resulting in two dimensions: public or social issues on the one hand, and private issues on the other hand. An overall picture of the cross-national varieties can be obtained from Figure 3.10, where we present the mean (factor) scores for each country on both dimensions which we have tentatively labelled private and public[5].

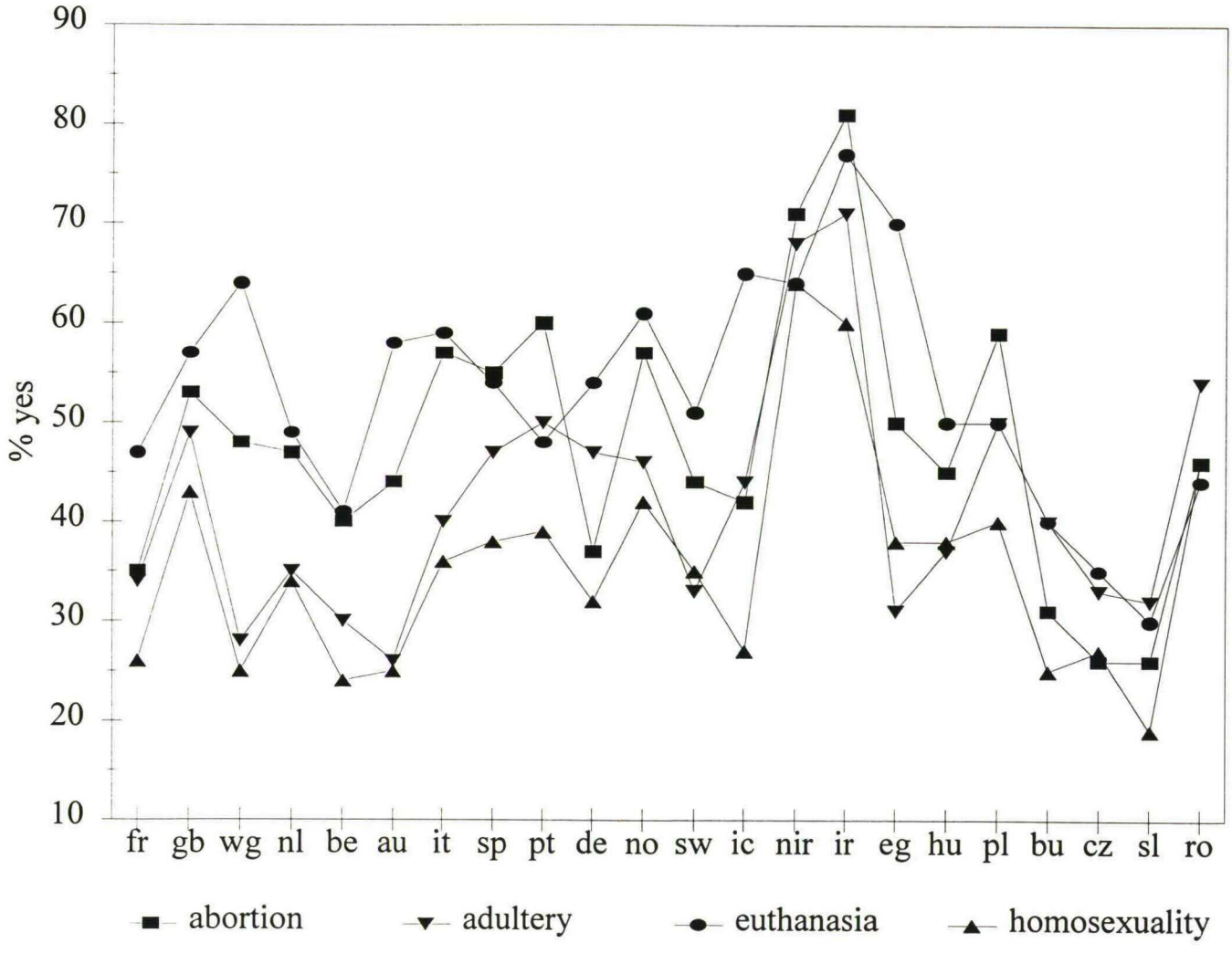

Figure 3.9 Proportions of respondents sharing the opinion that churches should speak out on abortion, extramarital affairs, euthanasia, and homosexuality

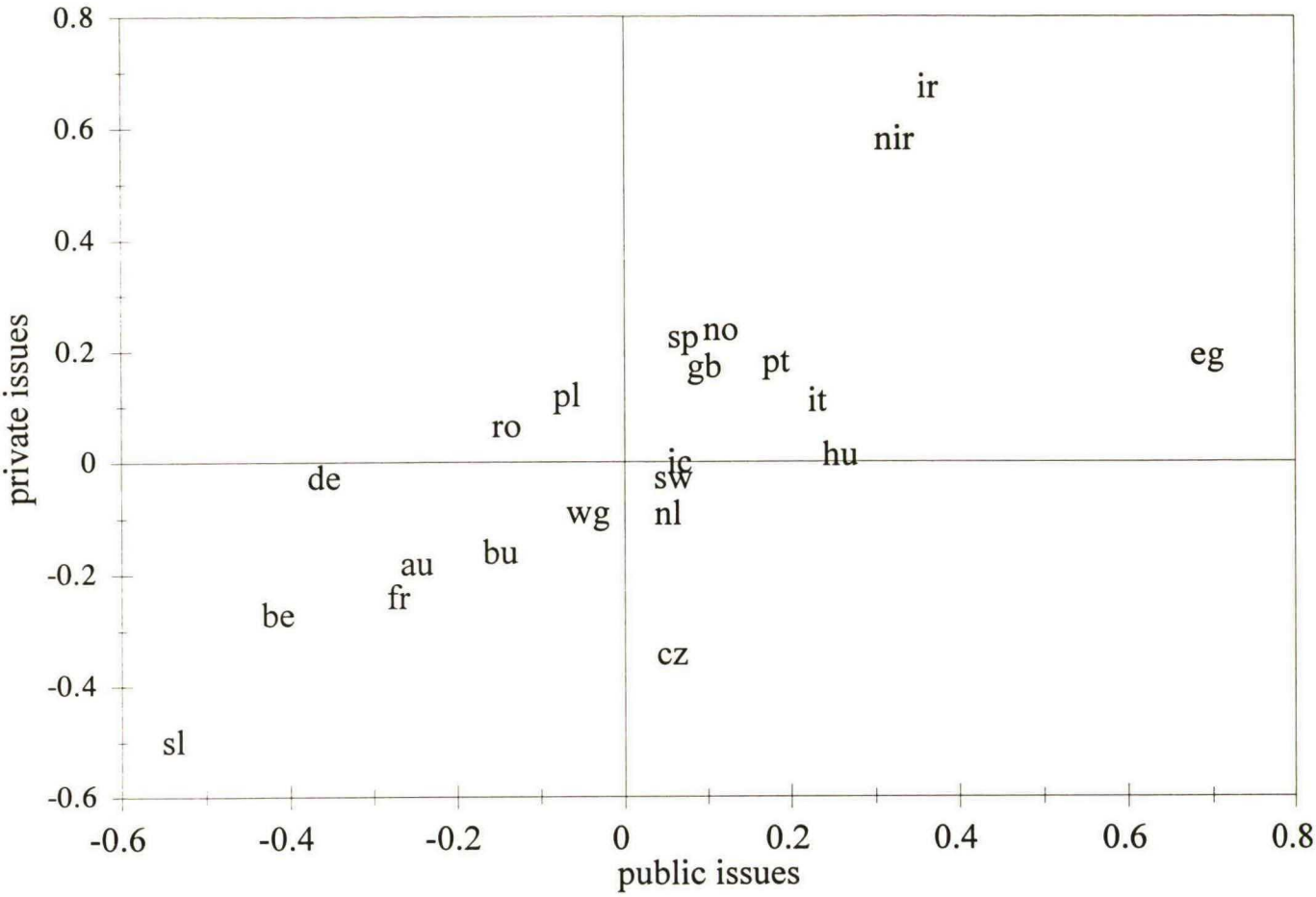

Figure 3.10 Countries' mean scores on private and public issues

People in both Irish countries, more than people in other countries, are of the opinion that churches should speak out on these issues, be it private or public. People in East Germany are of the opinion that it is proper for the churches to speak out on public issues, but in case of private issues they are more reluctant to consider this appropriate. The people in Slovakia are least likely to accept the role of the church in either public or private affairs. The Czechs are almost as reluctant as Slovak people to accept churches to speak out on private issues, but they do not resemble the Slovak people in not accepting the churches to speak out on public issues. Irish people accept most of all that the church expresses its views on both public and private issues, and in this they are the opposite of people in Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, Belgium. Although the results in Figure 3.10 are fascinating, a clear pattern is lacking. For instance, people in Norway, Great Britain, and Spain appear similar in their views as far as the acceptance of the authority of the church in public and private issues is concerned. Sweden, Iceland, and the Netherlands are similar as well, as are France and Austria. Polish people resemble the people in Romania, and not, as might have been expected, the Irish.

3.2.2.3. Church adequacy

The suggestion that more modern, secular and individualized countries will display lower levels of church-oriented attitudes leads also to the expectation that the idea that the churches provide adequate answers to various problems will be less accepted in the Nordic countries, whereas people in Southern Europe will be more eager to accept this role played by the churches. In Figure 3.11 it can be seen that in all countries, even the more modern ones, people regard the church as important in meeting the spiritual needs of the individual. The churches are regarded in all countries less adequate to provide answers to social problems.

It may not be a big surprise that even among people in more modern societies, churches appear popular for solving the spiritual needs. It has been argued that religion, particularly under conditions of high modernity, is primarily concerned with spiritual issues, the sacred and something beyond the perceptible (Beyer, 1994: 5). Religion and the churches provide 'categories and symbols that facilitate simultaneously man's comprehension of his circumstances and his capacity to evaluate them and to cope with them emotionally' (Wilson, 1982: 10). Apparently, most Europeans share this opinion. The churches provide answers to cope with spiritual needs and these answers are considered adequate.

Less adequate are the answers the churches give to other problems. In case of family problems and moral problems, more people in Eastern Europe than in the West of Europe regard the churches replies as adequate. Tomka has observed that public opinion 'in Hungary is firmly behind the strengthening of the societal, cultural, and political role of the churches' (Tomka, 1995: 20), and it may be that similar views exist among other Eastern Europeans as well. The expectation that church-oriented attitudes are less widespread in more modern societies seems confirmed; least accepted is the role of the church in Denmark and Sweden. Only small minorities in these Nordic countries share the opinion that the churches are giving adequate answers to the problems mentioned.

The results yield some evidence for the idea that the churches nowadays are seen most of all in connection with spiritual needs and not so much with issues concerning family life and social problems. Even moral problems are not self-evidently seen as the concern of the churches. This result seems to support the idea that 'the religious sphere came fully into its own, specializing in "its own religious" function and either dropping or losing many other "nonreligious" functions it had accumulated and could no longer meet efficiently' (Casanova, 1994: 21).

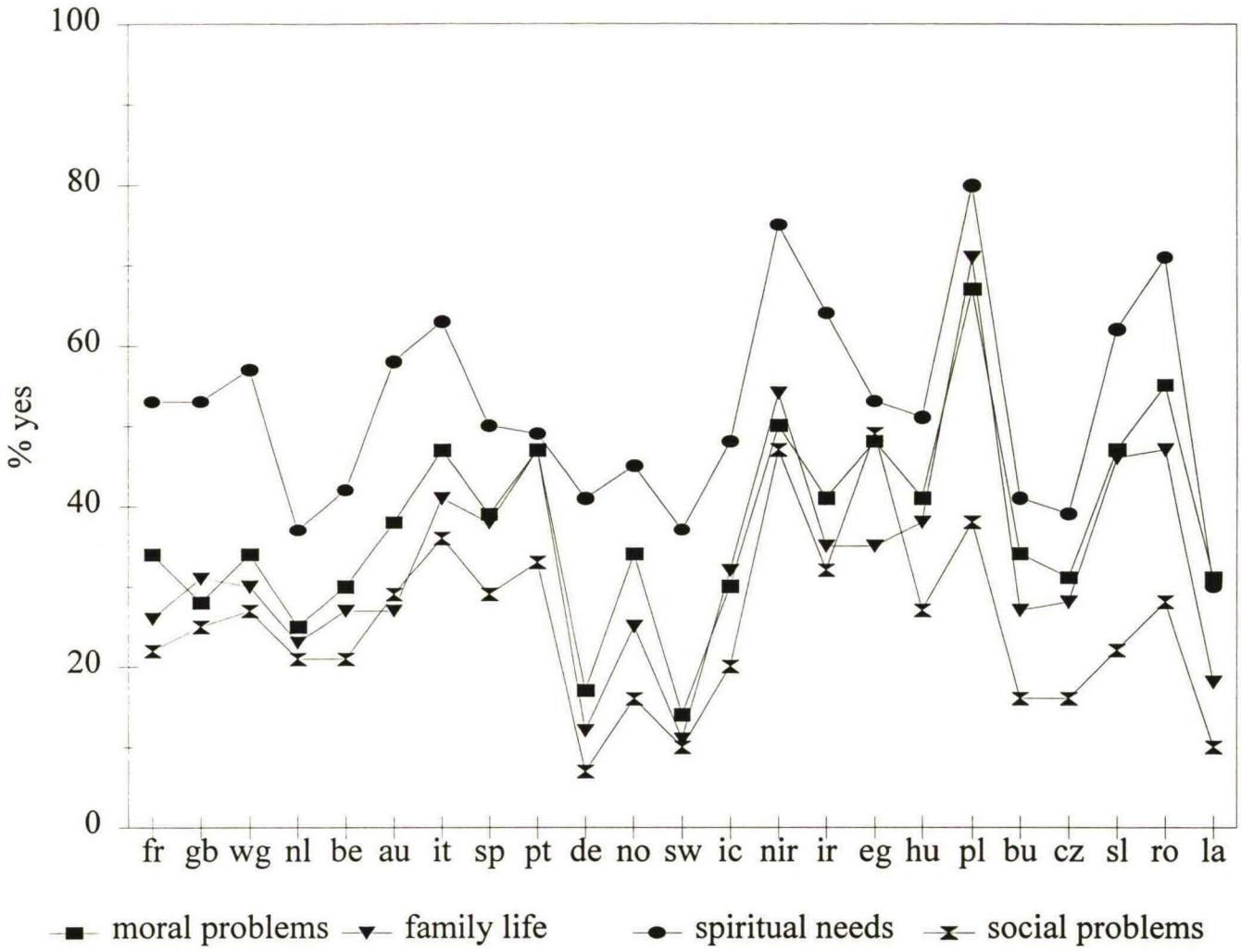

Figure 3.11 Proportions of respondents agreeing that the church gives adequate answers to moral problems, family problems, spiritual needs, and social problems

Some patterns appear strange, all the same. The Irish case for instance is unclear for despite the fact that the Irish appear the most religious and most traditional in their beliefs, only about two-fifths of its population is of the opinion that the church gives adequate answers to social and family problems. Even among the Irish who frequently attend religious services, the pattern is the same. Such proportions are among the lowest in all countries investigated here, and they are even below the figures found in Eastern Europe where the role of the churches has been rather modest. As we will see later on, the Irish have become less reliant on the churches during the eighties.

4. Catholic and Protestant cultures: distinctive or similar?

The religious profiles of the European countries presented thus far, yield often large differences, but also remarkable and sometimes unexpected similarities. However, a clear and understandable pattern does not appear from these data, and the question to be answered is how to explain the differences and similarities.

Differential patterns are, however, to be expected, because it has been argued that there are longstanding ideological differences between Catholic and Protestant cultures, not only in religious beliefs, but also in terms of mentality and social and political attitudes. Such differences between both religious traditions are still 'alive and well' (Greeley, 1989: 500). An important feature of the Catholic tradition is the directedness towards the community and shared responsibility, whereas Protestant traditions proclaim more individualistic stances. It has been argued that as a result Protestants are more rational, more individualistic and more autonomous than Catholics (Peters & Schreuder, 1987). Consequently, Protestants are assumed to be more sensitive to various 'modernizing' influences than Catholics (Weber, 1979; Durkheim, 1966; Tracy, 1981).

The results of our analyses thus far, do not provide much evidence for a Catholic-Protestant divide in Europe. Although, Ireland and Poland appear most religious in many respects, and the Nordic Protestant countries least religious, the pattern is not as clear as such observations might suggest. For instance, East German Protestantism seems to have resulted in a religious pattern that is quite distinctive from the Nordic pattern. Much more than people in the Scandinavian countries, East Germans are of the opinion that churches should speak out on public issues. The Catholic countries in Southern Europe appear less religious than Poland and Ireland, and dominant Catholic countries like France and Belgium often appear as secular as Denmark and Sweden. Further, it is remarkable that both Orthodox countries, Romania and Bulgaria, display such different patterns of religiosity. Romania is often close to the most religious countries, while Orthodox Bulgaria belongs to the most secular parts of Europe.

A clear pattern of Catholic countries on the one hand, and Protestant countries on the other, does not appear from these data. Does this mean that the Catholic and Protestant factors are no longer important in present-day European society and that other cultural factors are more important to explain cross-national varieties in religious attitudes?

One of these factors may be the degree of competition, an idea that has been forwarded by American researchers to explain the high levels of religiosity in the US despite the fact that this country is most modern. As was explained by the proponents of the religious market theory, the more pluralistic a country is religiously, the greater the religious vitality will be (Finke, 1990; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark & Iannaccone, 1994). European countries vary to the extent that they are mono- or pluriform religiously. The degree of pluralism is measured by Herfindahl's index. This index measures 'the probability that two people, selected at random from those claiming a religious affiliation, share the same religion' (Iannaccone, 1991: 166). Since a higher score on this index indicates less pluralism, a negative association can be expected between this index and the religious measures (see also Verweij, Ester & Nauta, 1997).

Another factor that will have an impact on people's religious attitudes is religious upbringing. If one has been raised and socialized in a devout family, it is more likely that one is more religious than someone who has not been raised in a devout family. In 1990 the *EVS* questionnaire included a question on this. In Ireland, Poland, Spain and Italy almost all respondents indicated that they were brought up religiously at home, whereas at the other extreme, religious upbringing is rare in Estonia (15%), and in Sweden it was limited to 30% of the respondents.

In several multiple regression analyses we have defined as the dependent variable various religious measures. As independent or predictor variables we included the proportion of Catholics in a country, the Herfindahl index, and the proportion of people in a country that was brought up religiously. The results indicate the strength of the impact of each of these independent 'country-characteristics'. In Table 3.5 we have displayed the pairwise (Pearson) correlations between the religious indicators and Herfindahl's index, proportion of Catholics, and proportions of respondents brought up religiously.

Table 3.4 Proportion of Catholics, proportions of respondents brought up religiously and Herfindahl index in 25 European countries

	% Catholics	% brought up religiously	Herfindahl index
France	57.7	71.1	.879
Great Britain	16.1	59.1	.553
West Germany	45.0	62.5	.499
East Germany	5.6	47.8	.707
Austria	78.3	81.1	.808
Italy	84.0	93.9	.961
Spain	86.0	92.5	.973
Portugal	70.6	79.2	.950
Netherlands	35.0	71.4	.534
Belgium	65.8	84.1	.916
Denmark	0.9	42.5	.950
Norway	2.3	45.0	.913
Sweden	0.6	30.1	.886
Iceland	0.7	75.1	.932
N. Ireland	30.7	83.9	.467
Ireland	93.3	94.1	.939
Hungary	42.9	69.0	.588
Poland	94.0	96.5	.948
Bulgaria	0.1	37.5	.575
Czechia	34.7	45.8	.772
Slovakia	59.5	79.7	.696
Romania	4.4	77.0	.834
Estonia	1.0	15.4	.444
Latvia	15.4	28.7	.335
Lithuania	58.1	65.8	.833

Both religious upbringing and numbers of Catholics appear to have significant impact on religiosity, traditional faith, transcendent world-view, church adequacy, and rites of passage. The impact of the degree to which people in a country have been brought up religiously is slightly stronger than the impact of the number of Catholics in a country. The low correlations between the various religious indicators and Herfindahl's index do not support the suggestion that pluralistic religious countries are more religious than mono-religious countries. The opposite seems more true: the correlations, although statistically not significant, are not negative, as expected, but positive.

Since religious upbringing is more common in Catholic countries than in Protestant countries[6] we have calculated the partial correlations between the religious indicators and religious upbringing, controlling for the proportions of Catholics. Most associations increased as a result of the introduction of this control variable. In particular, the correlation between church attendance and religious upbringing increased. Controlling for the proportions of Catholics, the correlation is .63 ($p = .000$).

The impact of religious upbringing is thus significant, but also the proportion of Catholics appears also to be a major attribute of country differences and similarities in religiosity. Nevertheless, we cannot find a clear Catholic-Protestant divide in Europe. Apparently other factors are more important than the distinction between Catholics and Protestants. This becomes clear from a comparison of the religious profiles of Catholics and Protestants in West Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands. All three countries have large numbers of people belonging to both of these religious traditions.

In Figure 3.12 we have displayed the main differences between Catholics and Protestants in Great Britain, West Germany and the Netherlands as far as their degree of religiosity and traditional belief is concerned. The comparisons reveal that Catholics in the Netherlands are more secular than the Dutch Protestants, whereas in Great Britain and Germany, the situation is reversed: here the Protestants represent the more secular part of the population.

Table 3.5 Pairwise correlations between percentage Catholics in a country, a country's Herfindahl index, percentage of people who were brought up religiously on the one hand and religiousness measures on the other

	index	% Catholics	% brought up religiously
religiosity	.220	.617**	.832***
traditional faith	.303	.429**	.767***
transcendental view	.013	.537**	.506**
immanentist view	.148	-.280	.020
church adequacy	.197	.413*	.686***
church attendance	-.184	.286	.069
private issues	-.076	-.107	-.286
public issues	-.139	-.073	-.021

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

5. The decline of religious beliefs and practices?

Grace Davie has interpreted the European religious situation not so much in terms of a religious decline, but more in terms of believing without belonging. In her words, 'many Europeans have ceased to belong to their religious institutions in any meaningful sense, but they have not abandoned, so far, many of their deep-seated religious motivations' (Davie, 1992: 223). Indeed, if belonging is measured by church attendance she maybe right, for attendance figures have decreased in general, but in terms of church membership her conclusion can hardly be confirmed, for, as we have seen, in most countries church membership is still rather high.

A comparison of the 1990 data with the data collected in 1981 enable us to explore questions as to whether or not levels of church involvement have declined, religious beliefs have changed and if the populations in Europe are converging or diverging in their religious orientations and practices. Further it is possible to investigate if a country's overall pattern of change is reflected in religious changes in different age groups as well.

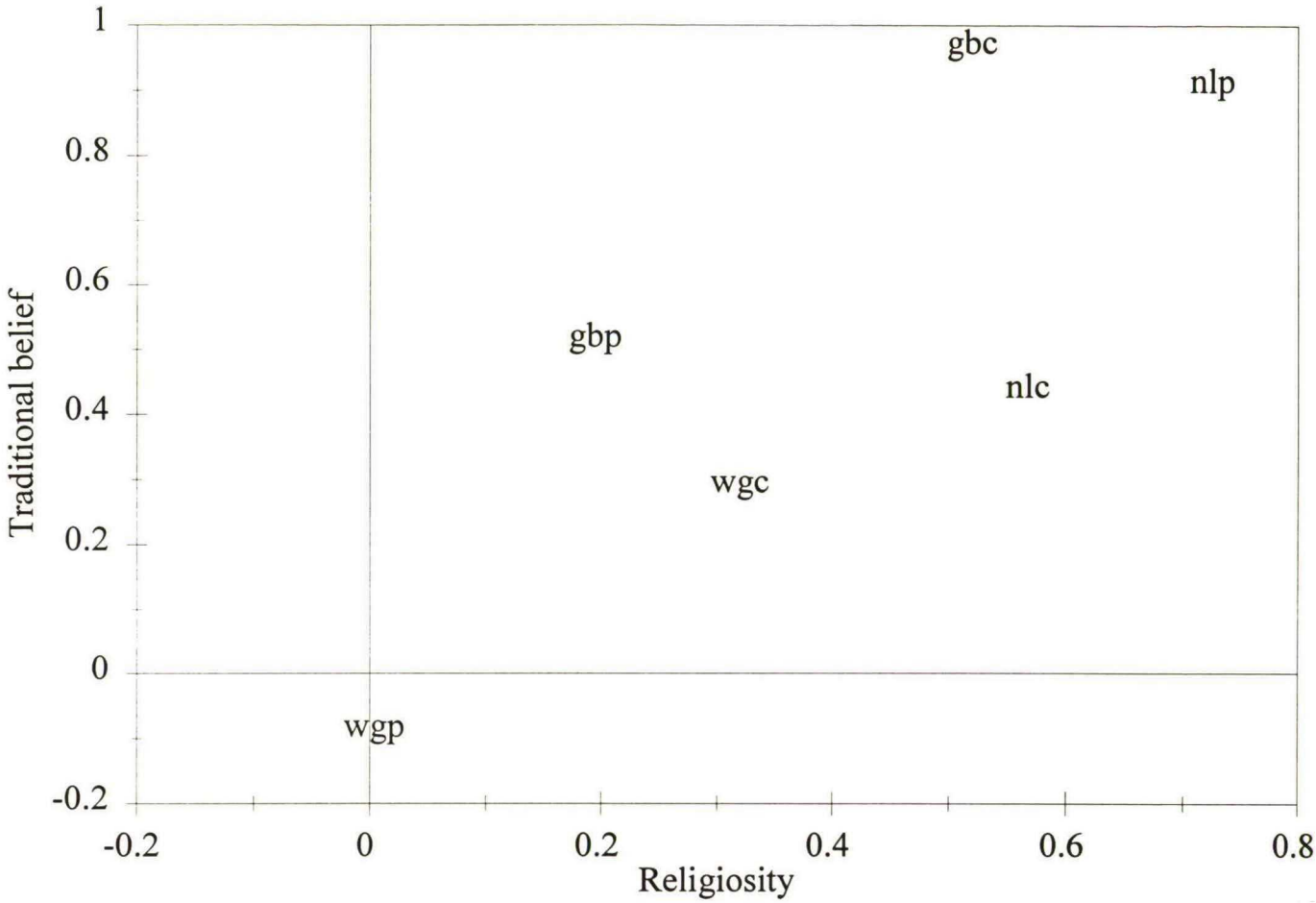

Figure 3.12 Degrees of religiosity and traditional belief for Catholics and Protestants in The Netherlands, West Germany and Great Britain (mean scores)

5.1 The decline of religious beliefs and practices

All the measures of religiousness which we have constructed, display a tendency to decline in Western Europe. However, to what extent this overall decline is indeed representative for all European countries cannot be inferred from such overall patterns. Since each country has had its own particular experiences, its own historical heritage and developments, differential patterns are to be expected (cf. Casanova, 1994; Dobbelaere, 1995). These differential patterns become clear in Figure 3.16 where the means scores in 1981 and 1990 for each country are presented.

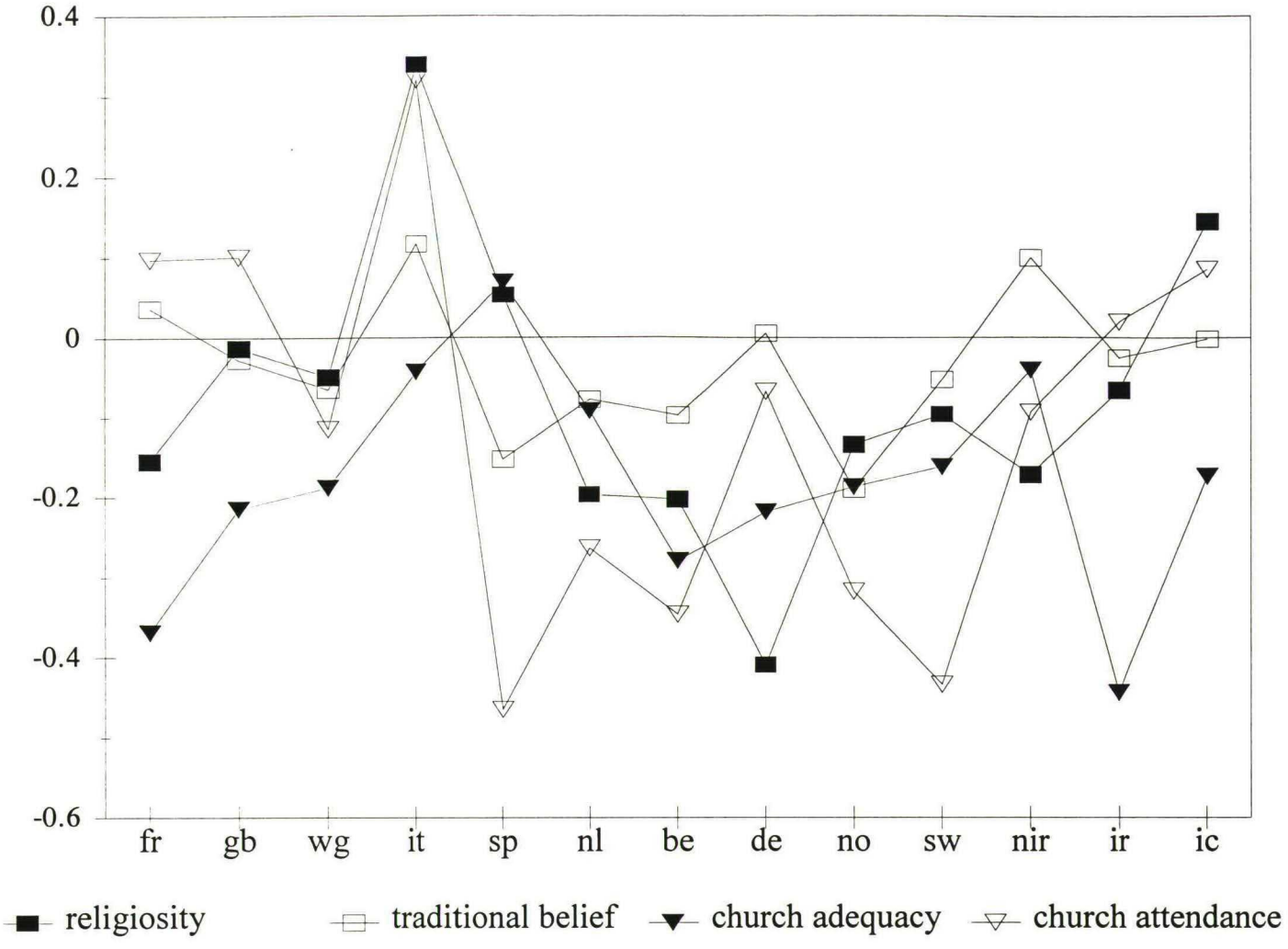

Figure 3.13 Changes in religiousness in thirteen countries

This overview reveals, generally speaking, that religiousness is indeed on the decline in Europe. Italy is one of the exceptions to this observation. Italians appear to have become more religious and even more religious in a traditional, institutional way. However, as in most other countries, Italians follow the European route of institutional decline in the sense that fewer Italians in 1990 than in 1981 share the opinion that the church is giving adequate answers to various problems in society. The apparent increase of religiousness among Italians may be due to the item 'belief in a personal God'. In 1981 and 1990 the item was not translated in te same way, and this resulted in a sharp increase in the number of people who 'believe in a personal God'. Whereas in 1981 about 28% of the Italians declared to believe in a personal God, this figure increased during the eighties to 67%.

Although the decline in levels of traditional belief are in most countries statistically not significant, the pattern of decline is clear. Orthodoxy decreased most in Spain. Casanova concluded already that 'Spain not only has joined the European Community but also has apparently adopted the general European pattern of secularization' (Casanova, 1994: 90). The religious decline in Spain may be attributed, according to Casanova, to the internalization of democratic principles by the Spanish population. As such the decline is connected with the disappearance of the Franco regime. This disappearance can also be regarded an explanation for the (small) increase in the degree to which Spanish people think that the churches are giving adequate answers to various problems in society. Spain is to only country where an increase can be observed, and it is likely that this increase is due to the fact that the Catholic church in Spain is no longer closely linked with Franco's dictatorial regime. As Casanova reports, the Spanish church has been transformed tremendously since the 1970s. From then on, the churches openly demanded 'the liberalization and democratization of the regime' and, possibly even more importantly, the Catholic church publicly confessed the sin 'for the role played by the church in the Spanish Civil War' (Casanova, 1992: 85).

More important than the declining levels of religious orthodoxy is the decline in religiosity and the adequacy of the churches' answers throughout Europe, Italy being the exception to this general rule as far as religiosity is concerned. Particularly in Denmark a rather sharp decrease in general religiosity has occurred. The decline in numbers of people who say that the church provides adequate answers to various problems indicates the increasingly marginal role the churches are playing in present day societies, and as such the institution of religion seems on the decline. The decline in the extent to which people in Ireland feel that the church gives adequate answers is remarkable, for this country has remained one of the most religious countries in Europe. However, it seems to indicate that even in this country 'there has been a collapse in the 'moral monopoly' of the church' (Hornsby-Smith & Whelan, 1994: 41). In Spain, as in most other countries, this seems to be reflected in the (relatively) sharp decline in church attendance. Levels of church attendance also declined in those countries which had low church attendance rates in 1981, such as Sweden and Norway. In France a small increase in church attendance can be noted, as is the case in Britain and Iceland, but these increases are statistically not significant.

The question of converging or diverging religious patterns can be answered in various ways, although one has to be very careful, for longitudinal analyses are needed covering a wider time span than are now available. However, if the distances between the mean scores of the countries have diminished, one may conclude that the countries religious positions have

become more similar, and thus that convergence has occurred. A simple comparison of the distance between the most extreme scores in 1981 and 1990 is thus a first indication of convergence or divergence.

Convergence can also be explored by examining developments within countries. If religious decline is strongest in countries that were (still) highly religious in 1981 than in countries that were less religious in 1981, it can be concluded that a process of convergence has taken place. Finally, whether or not convergence has occurred can be inferred from the (standard) deviations from the mean in both years. In case of convergence, the (standard) deviations will have diminished.

The distances between the extreme mean scores appeared to have increased on all four measures of religiousness, yielding a process of increasing difference between the most religious and least religious countries. However, the results are dependent upon which measure of religiousness is considered. For instance, the decline in religiosity in the Scandinavian countries is more marked than the decline in Ireland, whereas the declines in traditional belief appear less significant in both the most and least religious countries. When it comes to the decline in the opinions that the churches provide adequate answers to various problems, it is highly significant in Ireland but also in the Scandinavian countries and France. Church attendance decreased more in Sweden and Norway than it did in the Irish Republic.

This highly confusing result appears also from the comparisons of the (standard) deviations on the religiousness measures in 1981 and 1990. The standard deviations in both years differ significantly, and on most measures the variation around the overall mean declined. Only in the case of general religiosity can an increase be observed, but the European populations appeared more homogeneous in their orthodoxy, church adequacy and church attendance in 1981 than in 1990.

5.2 The religious decline

The analyses thus far all indicate a general trend of declining religiousness in most European countries, whether this is measured in terms of orthodox beliefs, religiosity or confidence in the churches. This decline in religious convictions is accompanied by a decline in church involvement. At the aggregate level, societies seem to have become less devout, but the overall trend of decline may be differential and more typical for certain groups in society. For example, age is related to religious attitudes and behaviours in the sense that younger people

appear more secular and less pious compared with the older people. As a consequence of this, it might be expected that, while youngsters will replace the elderly in society, society as such will become more secular and less devout. Religious value change can, in such a case, be attributed to the phenomenon of generation replacement. Generational or cohort effects suggest that there will be a gradual replacement of existing values by those of young people who form the 'leading' generation in value terms; the values held by young people will come to represent the views of society in general as successive generations replace each other and the values of older generations die out. For example as younger generations replace the old, they retain their less religious attitudes and thus society becomes more secular.

However, such a development presupposes that people's value orientations remain stable over time. Ron Inglehart's theory on political value change from materialism to post-materialism is grounded on such ideas of stable orientations (Inglehart, 1977; 1990; 1997). It might be asked, however, if this assumption holds for religious orientations as well. Aging often implies more reflection on life, and when people are approaching the end stages of their lives, they are often inclined to become increasingly interested in issues concerning the meaning and purpose of life and death. Religion provides answers to such basic questions of ultimate meaning (e.g. Geertz, 1973: 96; McGuire, 1987: 9; Wilson, 1982: 10), and aging can thus imply a return to religiosity and an increasing level of religiousness or even devoutness. If this is indeed the case, the replacement of generations does not necessarily mean a further decrease of religiousness. As one becomes older, one might become more religious and thus the overall decline will be hampered or even turn into a religious revival. Aging or life-cycle effect suggests that as individuals grow older, their values change so that the distinctive values of young people today will come to resemble the values we now see among older generations when young people reach an equivalent age. In this way, the values of older generations come to be successively reproduced as younger people gradually grow into the values of their forebears.

In order to explore in greater detail what is really going on we have analysed different age groups in society. Eight age groups are distinguished in both 1981 and 1990. The youngest generation in 1981 (18-26) has been replaced by another generation of youngest people (18-26) in 1990. Persons aged 18-26 in 1981 are the second youngest generation in 1990 (27-35). The oldest age group in 1981 (81 and over) has been replaced by another generation of 81 and over. This group was aged 72-80 in 1981. For each of these age groups means for the three religious orientations, as well as for church attendance, were calculated. By comparing the age groups on both years, inter-generational shifts appear, whereas intra-generational changes occur in comparing various age groups in time (aged 18-26 in 1981 compared with 27-35 in

1990 and so on).

The overall European results are presented in Table 3.6. The differences between younger and older generations are obvious. Young people are less religious than older people. Age is thus positively correlated with these various measures of religiousness. During the eighties the differences between the oldest and youngest age groups increased on most indices. Church adequacy being an exception. The youngest age groups are less religious compared to the age groups they are replacing. For instance, the 18-27 years group in 1990 is less religious than the same age group in 1981. But as can be seen in the last column of Table 3.6 aging seems to increase the level of religiosity. Not only for the older age groups, but also for the youngest age groups. In other words, as people get older their religiosity seems to increase.

Inter-generational differences appear also in levels of traditional belief. The youngest age group in 1990 is less orthodox in its belief than the age group it is replacing. In other words, shifts in traditional beliefs will be due to the replacement of generations. The levels of orthodoxy do not seem to change to a significant degree as people get older.

Older generations attend religious services more frequently than younger generations. This still holds in 1990, but the differences between the oldest and youngest generation increased. The replacement of age groups implies a further decline in church attendance. However, getting older means, in general, that people attend religious services more frequently. The latter does not apply to the youngest age group in 1981. In 1990 this age group attended religious services less frequently than the youngest age group in 1981.

Although the differences between the successive cohorts appear rather small and often statistically not significant, the replacement of generations will imply a further decline in religiousness. Further, the figures indicate that aging results in increasing levels of religiosity, at least measured by what we have called general or personal religiosity. All age groups have developed in a more pious direction and they are attending religious services more frequently in 1990 than in 1981. However, this is not so much the case as far as orthodoxy and church adequacy is concerned. The levels of traditional belief appear to remain rather stable over time; aging does not seem to affect the belief-content. Aging does affect the degree to which people are convinced that the churches are giving adequate answers to various problems in society. For most age groups aging seems to imply a loss of church's authority.

Table 3.6 Changes in religiousness over time between and within eight age groups in Europe (combined data set)

Religiosity	1981	1990	inter generational differences 90-81	intra generational differences 90-81
18-27	-.3453	-.3894	-.0441	
27-35	-.2465	-.2756	-.0291	.0697**
36-44	-.0147	-.1262	-.1115***	.1203***
45-53	.1300	.0732	-.0568*	.0879**
54-62	.2499	.2481	-.0018	.1181***
63-71	.3766	.3793	.0027	.1294***
72-80	.4456	.5376	.0920*	.1610***
81-89	.4860	.4747	-.0113	.0291
Traditional faith				
18-27	-.1624	-.2218	-.0594*	
27-35	-.1482	-.1842	-.3324	-.0218
36-44	.0287	-.1236	-.1523***	.0246
45-53	.1155	.0189	-.0966***	-.0098
54-62	.2234	.1508	-.0726*	.0353
63-71	.3226	.2572	-.0654*	.0338
72-80	.3529	.4132	.0603	.0906*
81-89	.2765	.2756	-.0009	-.0773
Church adequacy				
18-27	-.2359	-.2933	-.0574**	
27-35	-.2039	-.3169	-.1130***	-.0810***
36-44	-.0249	-.2483	-.2234***	-.0444
45-53	.1364	-.0977	-.2341***	-.0728**
54-62	.1983	.0571	-.1412***	-.0793**
63-71	.3211	.2125	-.1086***	.0142
72-80	.4688	.3723	-.0956**	.0512
81-89	.4477	.3822	-.0655	-.0866
Church attendance				
18-27	3.4074	3.1674	-.2400***	
27-35	3.3188	3.1414	-.1674**	-.266***
36-44	3.8662	3.5203	-.3459***	.2115***
45-53	4.1611	3.9921	-.1690*	.1259
54-62	4.3406	4.3467	-.0061	.1856*
63-71	4.5943	4.7327	.1384	.3921***
72-80	4.6624	4.8442	.1818	.2499*
81-89	4.3397	4.4192	.0795	-.2432

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Unfortunately, such observations camouflage the wide variety in developments within different countries. Although the overall pattern of change seems to point to institutional decline, and to a much lesser extent to a religious decline, for religiosity increases as one becomes older whereas confidence in the churches seems to decline, this pattern is far from uniform throughout Europe. There appear important exceptions to the overall findings, causing sometimes an increase in religiousness in certain age groups, sometimes a decrease. This counts for all measures we have developed for religiousness. Elsewhere we have displayed the figures for each age group in all European countries (Halman, 1992).

Because the increase in religiosity as one gets older is smaller than the differences between the age groups and their successor age groups or cohorts, it is to be expected that religiosity will decrease in the long run. The same applies to orthodoxy. The decrease will be mainly due to the replacement of age groups. Contrary to these developments, the general picture of intra-generational change in church adequacy is that of decrease. Aging implies a further decrease in levels of confidence in the church and together with the finding that younger cohorts show less confidence in the church than the older ones, confidence levels will further decrease.

6. Conclusions

The main purpose of this chapter was to present an overview of contemporary religiousness in European societies, and to explore the recent shifts in religious patterns. The dominant theme in societal's subdomain of religion is secularization. The concept of secularization denotes a process of cultural change in which religion is of decreasing importance in human society. According to the common understanding of this process, secularization is reflected in decreasing levels of behavioural practices and religious beliefs, but also in the shift from traditional religious authority to secular rational authority, and more recently to individual autonomy. Secularization is, however, just one of the many processes of societal change, but in general it is considered one of the most significant and far reaching processes that have transformed human society.

In this chapter we have explored how far this process of secularization has proceeded in Europe. Is Europe indeed as secular as has frequently been assumed? And what are the main religious profiles which can be discerned?

At the onset it was considered highly unlikely that a homogeneous European religious pattern would appear. Europe comprises a mixture of countries that despite common roots, differ markedly in their social-historical experiences, political and social structures, and cultural settings. For example, an important distinction in this respect was assumed to exist between Catholics and Protestants. Although there are some marked differences between Catholic and Protestant people in their religious orientations. We have not been able to discover clear and distinctive Catholic and Protestant religious profiles in Europe, and as such our analyses seem to contradict the findings of Ron Inglehart who reported a coherent Catholic group of countries with highly similar value profiles (Inglehart, 1997: 95).

Another demarcation line was assumed to exist between Eastern and Western Europe. The secular doctrines of the Communist regimes and the Soviet authorities strongly repressed religious activism in Eastern European countries. However, they did not succeed to the same extent in all countries, creating large variations in religious and secular patterns. Eastern Germany, in many respects the model country of Soviet society to the West (Gautier, 1997: 292), is indeed highly secular, but Poland remained highly religious in all respects.

More important than the Catholic-Protestant divide were the different levels of religious upbringing. But this does not bring us much further in the understanding of cross-national variations for the question then becomes why religious upbringing is more important in one country and less in another? Such results confirm the conclusions from previous empirical studies, that nation-specific historical interpretations are indispensable for the understanding and explanation of variations of religious orientations. Europe remains the 'melting pot' that it has always been.

It is hard, if not impossible, to understand and explain the different patterns of religiousness in Europe. A multitude of factors will be responsible for the observed differences and similarities. The analyses seem to indicate that despite the cross-national varieties in religious patterns, decline is most marked with respect to institutional religiosity, and less important as far as personal religiosity is concerned. We have seen that aging implies increasing levels of religiosity but not higher levels of confidence in the churches. On the contrary, as one becomes older, the levels of confidence in the church decrease. Of course, such interpretations are tentative, for they are based on two measurements in time only; more time points are needed to draw firmer conclusions as to what is taking place in contemporary Europe. Further, the understanding and interpretation of what is taking place in the religious subsystem is dependent upon the definition of religion that is used. Substantive definitions of religion are

rather restrictive and, usually in such definitions, reference is made to a higher order, or a supra-natural realm (McGuire, 1987: 7). Our analyses seem to indicate that such a religion is indeed on the decline. People living in present-day society adhere less to the traditional institutional religious doctrines, they have less confidence in the church and their leaders than in the 1981s, and they attend religious ceremonies less frequently than before.

Functional definitions allow for more phenomena to be regarded as religious, for such definitions do not focus on what religion is, but what the functions of religion are. As such they are much broader and commonsensical (McGuire, 1987: 9). According to Yinger (1977), religion has to do with 'ultimate concerns'. Religion gives answers to the 'ultimate problems of human life' and it can be defined as 'a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence' (Bellah, 1970: 21). So, when defining religion in functional terms it becomes clear that religion, and not only Western Christianity (see for instance Geertz, 1973), provides people with meaning and an interpretation of life events like suffering and death. Secularisation seen from a functionalist view of religion means that people are either no longer able or no longer choose to explain the origin and the meaning of the cosmos and of human life in the context of a transcendent and supra-natural order.

Although traditional beliefs are on the decline, large majorities of the populations in Europe still believe in a personal God or some sort of spirit or life force. The proportions of people who do not believe in a personal God or life force are modest and atheism is not widespread at all among Europeans. So, despite the fact that the theistic or transcendental beliefs seem to be on the decline in most countries, people have not turned into disbelievers. The question to be answered in the near future is, what comes instead of or next to this theistic and transcendental belief systems? Or to put it in more popular terms: what alternative meaning systems are arising?

EVS cannot give adequate answers to such a question, but most attempts to discover alternatives for traditional religiosity have failed. It is to be expected that there will be religious and spiritual needs in the near future, but the solutions for such needs are to a lesser extent found within traditional religious institutions. The European religious decline seems mainly confined to a institutional decline.

Notes

1. Recently an international project to explore world views in modern society has started (for more information see Holm & Björkqvist, 1996).

2. Standard spssx hierarchical cluster analysis was applied using Ward Method.

3. It was asked whether one thought is was important to hold a religious service for any of these events.

4. The items were: disarmament; abortion; third world problems; extramarital affairs; unemployment; racial discrimination; euthanasia; homosexuality; ecology and environmental issues; government policy.

5. The 'private' dimensions contains the items: abortion, extramarital affairs, euthanasia, homosexuality. The mean inter-item correlation between these items is .53; $\alpha = .82$. The 'public' dimension refers to the other items, disarmament, third world problems, unemployment, racial discrimination, ecology and environmental issues, governmental policy. The mean inter-item correlation between these items is .45; $\alpha = .83$.

6. Pearson correlation between religious upbringing and proportion of Catholics is .79 ($p = .000$).

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